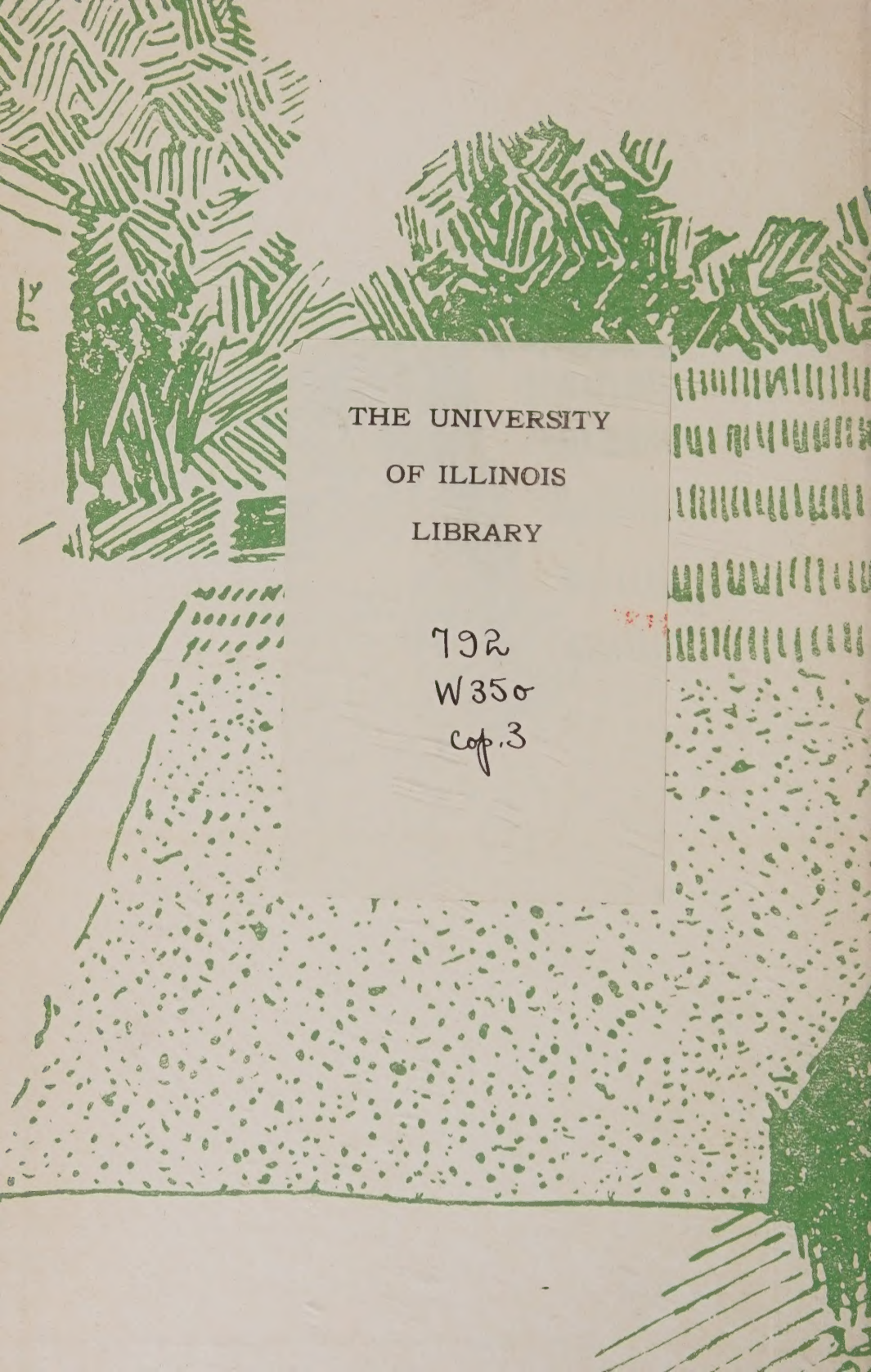
OUTDOOR THEATERS

FRANK A. WAUGH



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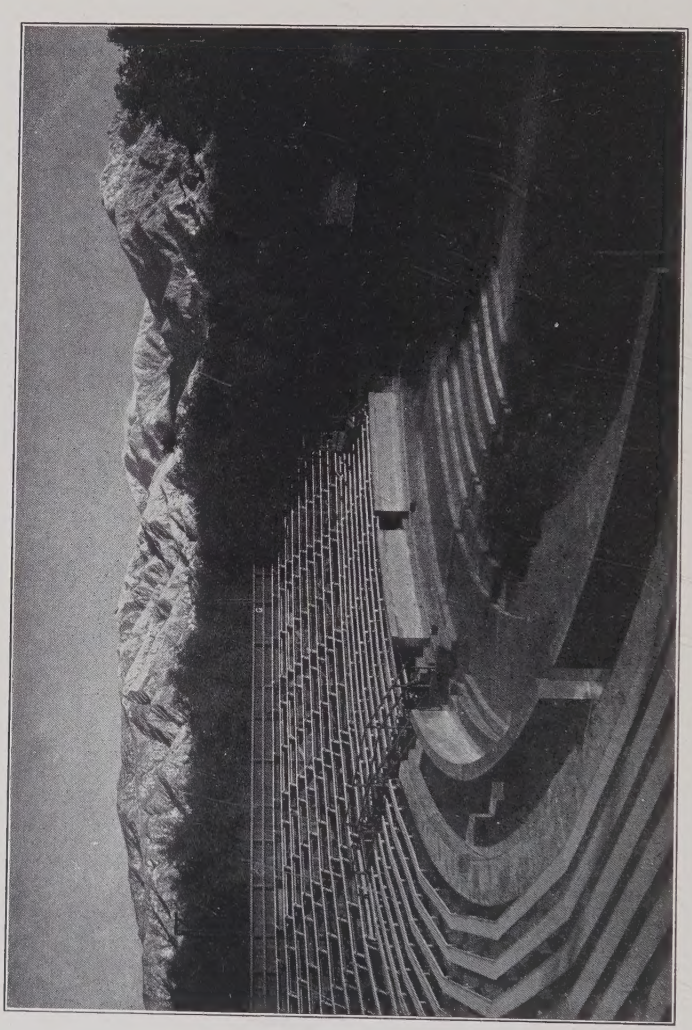

COLLEGE THEATER AT POMONA, CALIFORNIA

OUTDOOR THEATERS

THE DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND
USE OF OPEN-AIR AUDITORIUMS

FRANK A. WAUGH

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TO MY ASSOCIATE

PROFESSOR ARTHUR KENYON HARRISON

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS CONSTANT HELP AND
NEVER-FAILING SYMPATHY, THIS VOLUME
IS MOST CORDIALLY INSCRIBED

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OUTDOOR THEATERS

In direct relation to the redeeming of country and industrial districts through constructive leisure, is the founding of outdoor theaters for the people.

In the country, at present, there are few, or none, which are not privately owned, built usually for city "colonies" in the country. Yet no better investment—in pleasure and the resultant attraction of wealth—could be made by a country community than an outdoor theater, properly conducted during the outdoor season. This consideration I suggest to the officers of all local Granges. The MacDowell outdoor stage at Peterborough, N. H., is an excellent precedent for the founding of such theaters. The summer circuit of the Coburn Players demonstrates an already nationwide demand for them.

The glory of the Greek outdoor theater need only be referred to, in suggestion. Under the sun and stars, as nowhere else, dramatic art becomes convincing to the people.

In cities, the public parks and commons should certainly be provided with such theaters: an existing prejudice to the contrary in some cities is merely the relic of individualistic or Puritanical ideals. Since the parks are for the people's civic pleasure, they should be made full and efficient instruments, by means of civic art. The outdoor theater at Berkeley, California, has proved itself the noblest direct art influence in the San Francisco region. It has also, in performances there by Sarah Bernhardt, Margaret Anglin, Maude Adams, Robert Mantell, and

other professional companies, illustrated the leadership of the theater's art, even under the commercial conditions which now prevent it from performing such public service universally.

PERCY MACKAYE.

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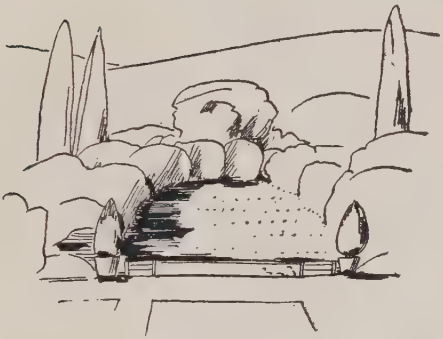
I

QUESTIONS OF USE



OUTDOOR THEATERS

QUESTIONS OF USE

IN order to secure the greatest enjoyment from the outdoor theater it is necessary to know how to use it. It cannot be used like an indoor theater. This ought to be sufficiently plain. Yet attempts are sometimes made to transfer the performances of an ordinary playhouse directly to the out-of-doors, and such transfers are certain to result in disappointment.

A good principle to follow in this matter is this: produce in an outdoor theater only such entertainments as can be presented there to better advantage than in the indoor theater. This rule should be interpreted to apply both to the performance and to the audience. Those in attendance must be at least as comfortable and as well provided for in the outdoor theater as they would be indoors, and the performance must be such that it is artistically

more effective in the outdoor setting. If a play can be given better on an indoor stage, or if the audience can be better accommodated in the indoor playhouse, it is a great mistake to take the performance out-of-doors.

"Cranbrook"—The Dressing Rooms

Now there are a considerable number of plays and types of entertainment which can be effectively presented in the outdoor setting. Last spring, when the wild crab apple trees were in blossom, my friend Mr. Jens Jensen, artist and landscape gardener, arranged an ideal entertainment for some of his

friends. He found a grassy glade beside a brook set beautifully with blossoming crab apples. Having seated the audience on a sloping bank, he introduced a pretty girl in white, who sat beneath the crab apple tree and played Mendelssohn's "Spring Song" on the harp. In response to this music there appeared from the dark recesses of the surrounding wood a group of fairies—children dressed in browns —who danced on the grass.

This picture is complete in itself. It does not require a plot, a dramatic climax, or a dénouement. It is an ideal type of performance for the outdoor theater or players' green.

The Shakespearean Tradition

It is the historic tradition that Shakespeare's plays were first produced on a stage without scenery. Further than that, the playhouse itself was almost as open and out-of-doors as the modern aerdrome. It would be much less of a shift, therefore, to take any of the Shakespearean plays from their original setting to an outdoor theater than to

take them to the big elaborate playhouses of Broadway and the Strand, with all their spectacular stage effects. The tradition of Shakespeare therefore seems to make his masterpieces reasonably available for outdoor performances.

Some of them have always had a reputation in this field. "As You Like It" has been widely regarded as an outdoor play, and if there is a college in the country where the local dramatic club has not some time performed "As You Like It" on the college campus, such an institution ought to be investigated. Other plays and parts of plays are almost equally adapted to outdoor presentation, as, for example, "Midsummer Night's Dream," and parts of "Cymbeline," "Hamlet" and "Lear."

This tradition for the performance of Shakespeare on the lawn has been greatly intensified in recent years by the work of certain professional and semi-professional troupes, most notably the Ben Greet Players. Their presentations have reached a high degree of artistic success, and have pleased thousands of spectators. It may fairly be said that such performances have reached beyond the high-

brow audiences and have actually touched the popular imagination.

Modern Drama

Acting on the principle already announced, that we should never present on an outdoor stage any performance which can be better cared for indoors, we have practically eliminated all modern drama. There is hardly a piece of any sort, known or unknown, which has not been prepared especially for the modern playhouse with its curtains, its wings, and its easy shifts of scenery. To be sure there are frequently found in these plays certain scenes or acts represented as passing out of doors. It might be possible, therefore, to select such fragments and to present them decently on an outdoor stage; but these parts are so rare and genuinely fragmentary that it is hardly worth while to consider them.

While we rule out practically the entire body of modern drama as it exists, this need not necessarily close the chapter. It is still possible to produce modern drama with all the best and worst and

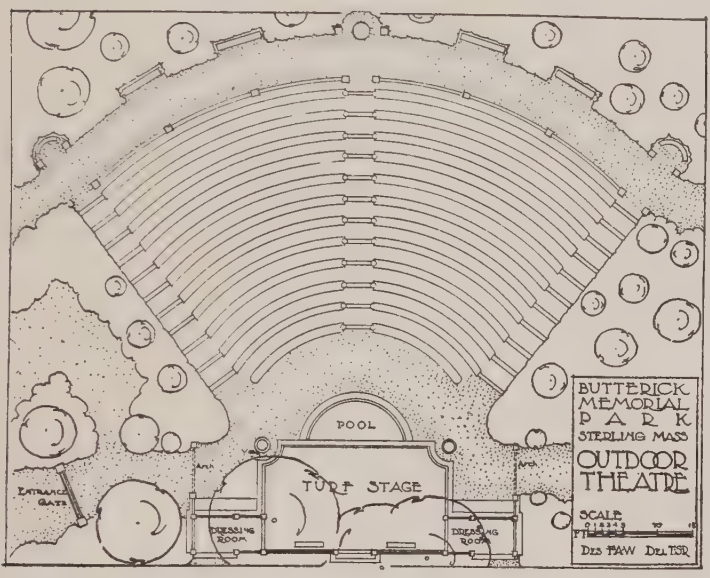
most popular (either best or worst) ideas, facts and fashions of the hour, and to cast these ideas into such a scheme as will fit the outdoor theater. In other words, any good playwright could, with reasonable ease, write an outdoor drama if he tried. Let us hope that the work will be undertaken by many competent persons.

The Rural Drama

With the present rejuvenation of rural life many suggestions have been offered, amongst others the idea of a rural drama. Doubtless different persons have different visions of what the rural drama ought to be. Certainly one fair interpretation of the thought is that it should present a true, artistic and inspiring picture of rural life. This is already done in a few such plays as "The Old Homestead," but it is possible to go considerably further in this direction, and especially to develop a drama which will be distinctly adapted to the rural environment. "The Old Homestead," for example, is a delightful country play, especially effective when presented

THE AUDITORIUM AND THE STAGE AT PROSPECT PARK, ST. LOUIS. "THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN"

on a New York City stage. What we would really like to have is a rural drama which would reach its artistic perfection when presented in a purely rural environment.



Of course we dismiss without further comment the ruck of "rural" stuff, "rube specialties," and the like, which have a constant market in the city playhouses, but which have no connection at any point with what we are now discussing. The rural drama,

properly speaking, remains to be developed. When it comes, however, it ought to find its natural setting in the outdoor theater.

The Greek Drama

In studying the field of drama, with reference to outdoor presentations, every one must be immediately struck by the ancient Greek literature. Here we have a considerable body of dramatic writing definitely produced for outdoor performance. This literature is known to have a high degree of artistic excellence, and has been urged upon students of all classes for centuries.

When we come to examine this material we are forcibly struck with the similarity which it shows at certain points to the modern popular drama. It was in every way a popular article. The work of Aristophanes, for example, abounds in local political hits, cheap "gags" for the gallery, shady street jokes, and much of the stuff which is now considered most cheap and vulgar in our most popular playhouses. The remarkable modernity of this ma-

terial cannot be better emphasized than in remarking that one of the plays of Aristophanes, "The Ecclesiazusae," written 393 years B. C., has recently been translated under the title "Votes for Women," and that it very cleverly presents the modern question just as one might get it in Kansas or New Jersey.

However, this is not the whole of the Greek drama, the main body of which is to be found in Euripides, Æschylus and Sophocles, with Aristophanes taking fourth place. All these plays are worthy of the most careful study in reference to modern acting out-of-doors, and some of them are well worth reproduction in substantially their ancient form.

The great advantage of study of the Greek drama, however, comes from a consideration of its form. This form seems to be very much better adapted to the outdoor theater than the popular plays of the day, which consist of a complicated plot developed through four or five acts with a complete change of scenery at each curtain. In distinction from this, the Greek drama had the

simplest possible dramatic form. There was very little plot, and the dramatic action moved rather slowly and very simply. There was a minimum of acting, in the modern sense of complicated stage business, the ideas being presented more frequently in the form of recitations or very simple dialogues. A very small number of actors were, therefore, required for the drama proper. The various episodes or paragraphs of this program of recitations and dialogues were supported by choruses sung or chanted by a costumed group more or less in the background. These choruses presented both a visual and an auditory background to the dialogue, serving thus to complete the picture and make it more interesting.

This Greek model would seem to be capable of ready adaptation to the present needs of the outdoor theater.

Masques

Masques and simple pageants would seem to be more nearly the ideal type of performance for the garden theater. These have a greater simplicity of

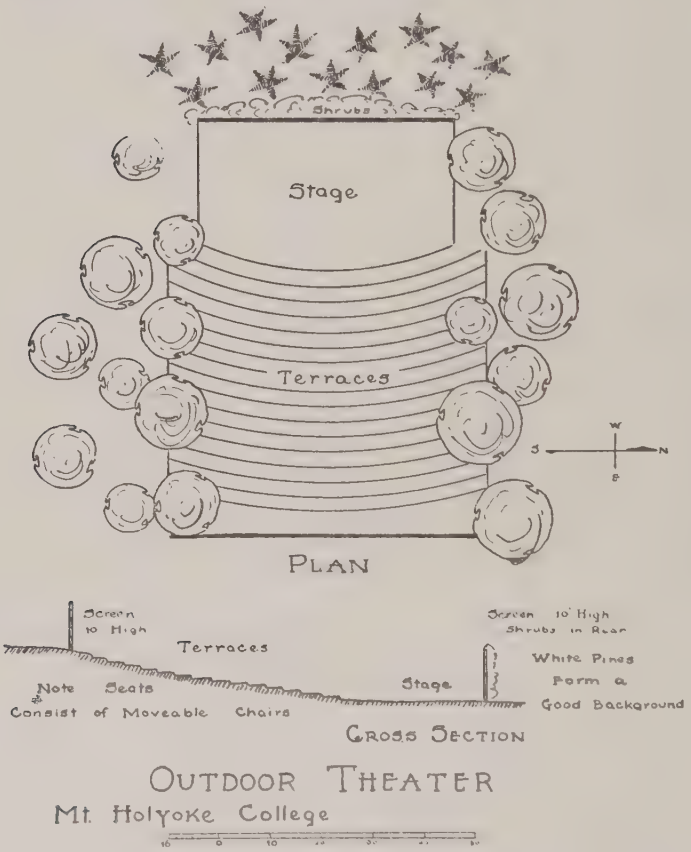
structure, depend less on purely literary effects, but more upon the stage picture and upon the use of symbolism. It is worth while to notice that a few fairly successful masques have been produced in this country during the last few years, notably Mr. Percy Mackaye's famous "Bird Masque." It is amongst literature of this sort we ought to look for the things most suitable to outdoor performance.

Meantime audiences should learn to depend more upon their imaginations, more upon poetic symbolism, more upon broad suggestions, and less upon detailed verbal development of a complicated plot.

Informal Programs

Our study of the requirements of the outdoor theater have thus led us to the general conclusion that simplicity of plot and smoothness of dramatic action are particularly required to make our outdoor performances successful. This leads us naturally to a consideration of the less formal types of entertainment, such as recitations, ballad singing, simple folk dancing, and various musical

programs. Those who have heard the Fuller sisters sing their charming English ballads can easily imagine how effective their performances would be



if presented in an attractive intimate garden theater. Musical programs of various kinds, especially those commonly called chamber music, can be made very effective outdoors. There is something about most music which harmonizes exquisitely with the landscape. Most of the simple classics, as, for example, Titl's "Serenade," Mascagni's "Intermezzo Sinfonico," Haendel's "Largo," and all the delightful songs with or without words by Schubert, Schumann and Mendelssohn, could not possibly find a more effective presentation than in the garden theater of a pleasant summer evening with a quiet sky and a smiling moon.

Perhaps we shall find the best use of all for our garden theaters in the presentation of such entirely informal programs of recitations, singing, and instrumental music as we have here sketched.

Formal Speaking

It may be worth while also to call attention to the value of the outdoor stage for formal speaking. In many parts of the country it is customary to

hold religious services, especially preaching, out of doors during the summer months. Evening preaching is more commonly undertaken on a lawn than the regular mid-day services, but both are pretty well known. The idea of outdoor preaching is perfectly sound and worth further study. It is encouraging to think how much could be accomplished in a properly designed proseuche and with a form of religious service nicely adapted to such an environment.

Other forms of public speaking could also be accommodated out-of-doors. It is interesting to remember that the public affairs of the earliest republics were conducted in this manner, the agoræ of the Greeks and the forums of the Romans being simply public squares open to the sky where all kinds of public and political addresses were delivered.

II

PROBLEMS OF DESIGN

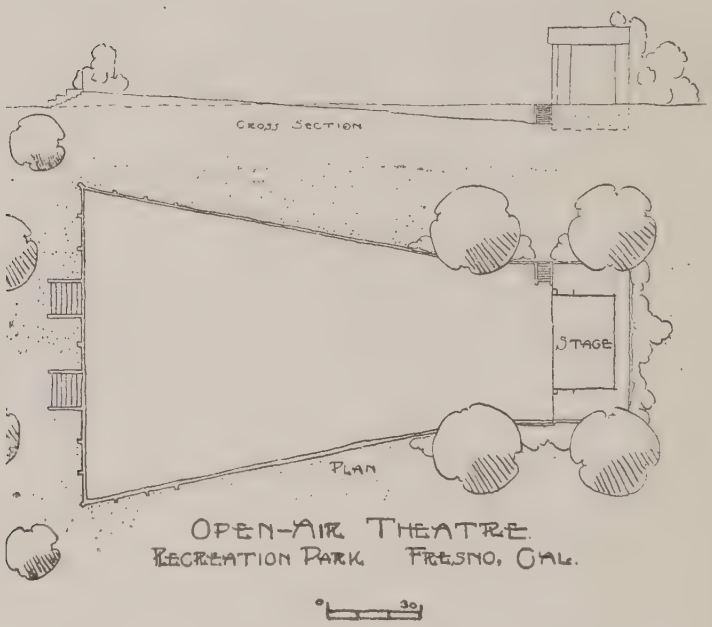
PROBLEMS OF DESIGN

THE development of the outdoor theater presents a twofold problem. On the one hand the physical theater itself must be designed, built and equipped, while on the other hand a careful study must be made of the literary structure and dress of the performance to be given in the theater. The performance must be adapted to the theater and the theater to the performance. For this reason every problem in design and construction must be solved in view of the special use to which the theater is to be put.

Outdoor auditoriums of many kinds already exist in America. For the most part they may be classified into (a) stadiums, chiefly for athletic games; (b) large temporary grounds arranged for pageantry; (c) outdoor commercial places of amusement, "aerdromes," etc., used for moving picture shows, summer vaudeville, etc.; (d) garden theaters in the restricted and more artistic sense,

adapted to masques, ballad singing, chamber music, etc.

The big athletic stadiums of this country stand

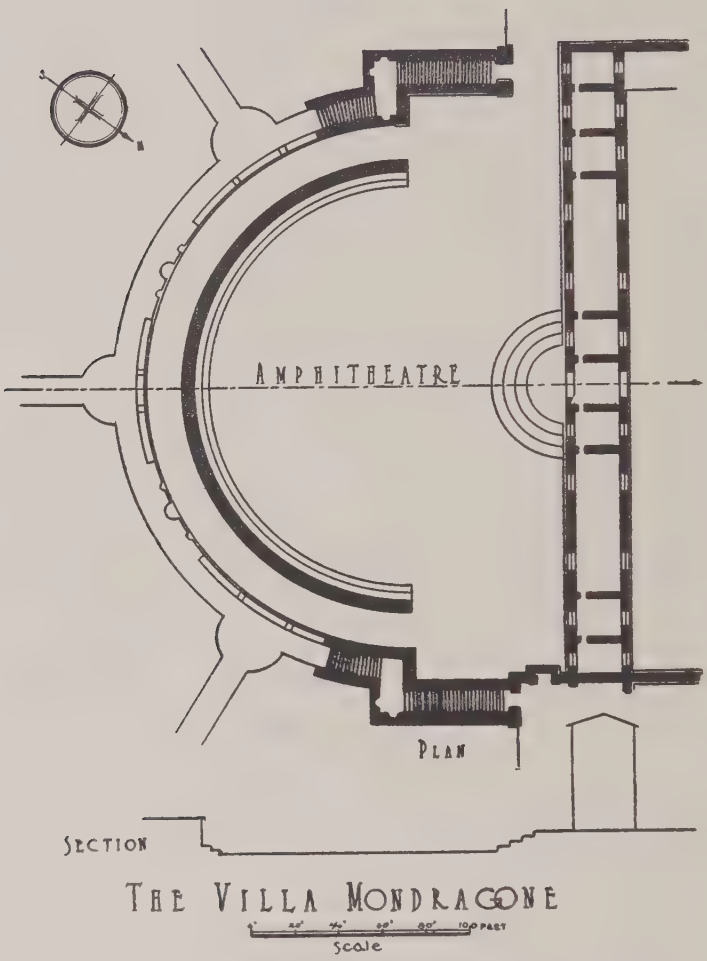


in a class by themselves. They have been occasionally used for dramatic performances, especially pageantry, and might be more extensively used in that way to considerable advantage. Of course the

regular intercollegiate football games are much more valuable as spectacles than as games of skill. Many of them might fairly be called pageants in themselves. The brilliant artistic effect is very much more fetching and much more valuable socially than the competition for touchdowns. In the following discussion, however, I do not intend to consider the design and construction of stadiums of this class.

The design of a suitable setting for any pageant should, of course, be regarded as a matter of prime importance. Some attention appears to have been paid to this point in almost every case, including both the pictorial setting for the stage and the comfortable disposition of the visitors. Nevertheless performances of pageantry have been so notably local and temporary that nothing much better than a makeshift treatment has ever been offered for them. It has not been possible to give them the advantages of a thoroughly well-built auditorium or of an ideally designed stage. Further than this it seems impracticable to go at the present time.

It is obvious that very much might be done for



THE VILLA MONDRAGONE

Scale

the improvement of the commercial "aerdromes." For the most part these are rather shabby structures consisting of a wooden enclosure with a cheap wooden stage, the interior of the auditorium being commonly ornamented with brilliant advertising posters celebrating different kinds of tobacco, patent medicines and corsets. These theaters, however, are well worth better treatment. They represent a sound commercial enterprise and one which is capable of much wider development. If the proprietors of such establishments would secure the assistance of first-class architects and landscape architects to design their settings, substituting attractive foliage masses for coarse advertising, presenting well balanced design in place of the common squalid setting, it would be good business for everybody and a substantial contribution to American art.

The following discussion, however, is directed primarily to the design of the outdoor theater in its strictest definition. It holds in view the equipment of a place for first-class artistic presentation of suitable drama, folk dancing, ballad singing, readings,

music, etc. Some of the features of such theaters can be pointed out with confidence.

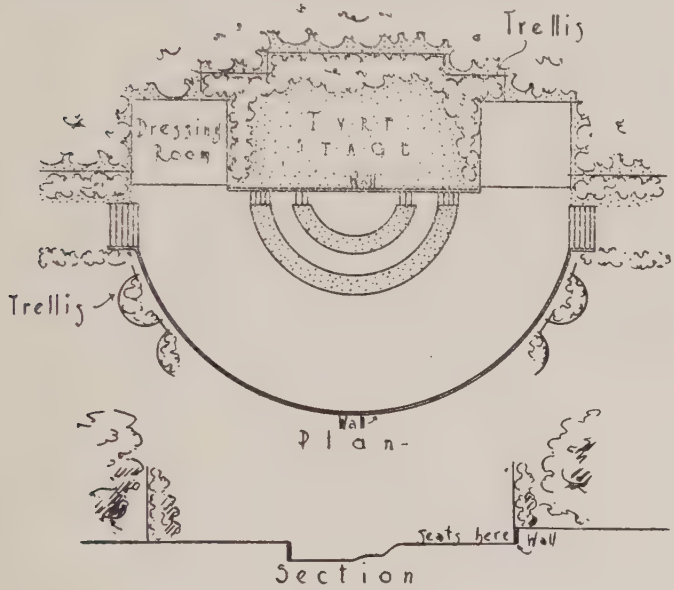
Size

It seems possible to standardize rather definitely the size of outdoor theaters of all classes. The football stadium should be as large as necessary—in other words, as large as possible in most cases. There seems to be no limit to the size of such structures except the limit of vision. It is not expected that visitors will hear much of what is said on the grounds.

In a similar way it seems to be understood that an auditorium for pageantry will have to be a large one. In general the pageant requires considerable space both for actors and auditors.

The commercial "aerdrome" should seat approximately 500. Anything less than this is a doubtful commercial success; anything more is unsatisfactory to the audience. In fact it is practically impossible to attract and satisfy audiences larger than 500 with legitimate entertainment of moving pictures and summer vaudeville.

In the matter of outdoor theaters proper, it is also quite clear that a small theater is better than a large one. In many of the theaters of the old



A GARDEN THEATRE
MANNHEIM · GERMANY

Italian villas the accommodations would serve only the smallest audiences, sometimes not more than a dozen or two.

Furthermore it seems to be a technical and artistic requirement that the outdoor theater should be made compact and intimate. If the place is large and open, the performers and spectators being separated by considerable spaces, then the burden upon the performers of reaching the auditors becomes altogether too great. This difficulty is both physical and psychological. It is a very real difficulty in an outdoor theater and must be heroically overcome. The way to overcome it is to contract the size of the theater, to bring the audience and performers closely together, and to give the place a strong feeling of enclosure and privacy.

It seems fair to estimate therefore that a garden theater, to be successful from an artistic standpoint, should not undertake to care for audiences larger than 300 or 400. Even better artistic results can probably be secured in most situations by cutting the auditorium down to accommodate not more than 200. Generally speaking, however, we may look upon 500 as the maximum.

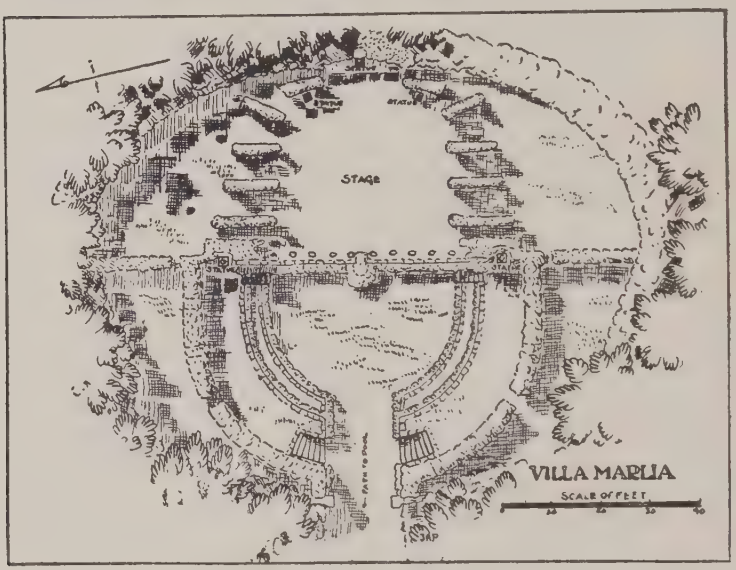
A CALIFORNIA "GREEK" THEATER. COLLEGE THEATER AT POMONA COLLEGE, CALIFORNIA

Enclosure

The commercial "aerdrome," of course, requires enclosure in order that everybody can be kept out except those who have paid the admission fee. Nearly all outdoor theaters are used at times for paid performances and this same problem arises in a more or less definite way. In some cases it will be necessary, therefore, to enclose a theater against unpaid intruders. Such an enclosure can usually be made with woven wire fencing which can be introduced in such a manner as to be wholly invisible or at least unobtrusive.

So far this is wholly a practical matter, but artistically the sense of enclosure is much more important. The theater must be secluded and private. It cannot be open to all the world without inviting a wandering attention on the part of all auditors. Even if the visitors have such self-control as to enable them to concentrate their attention definitely upon the stage when other interests are visible outside, it is still exceedingly important that the audience and the performers should feel a sense of inti-

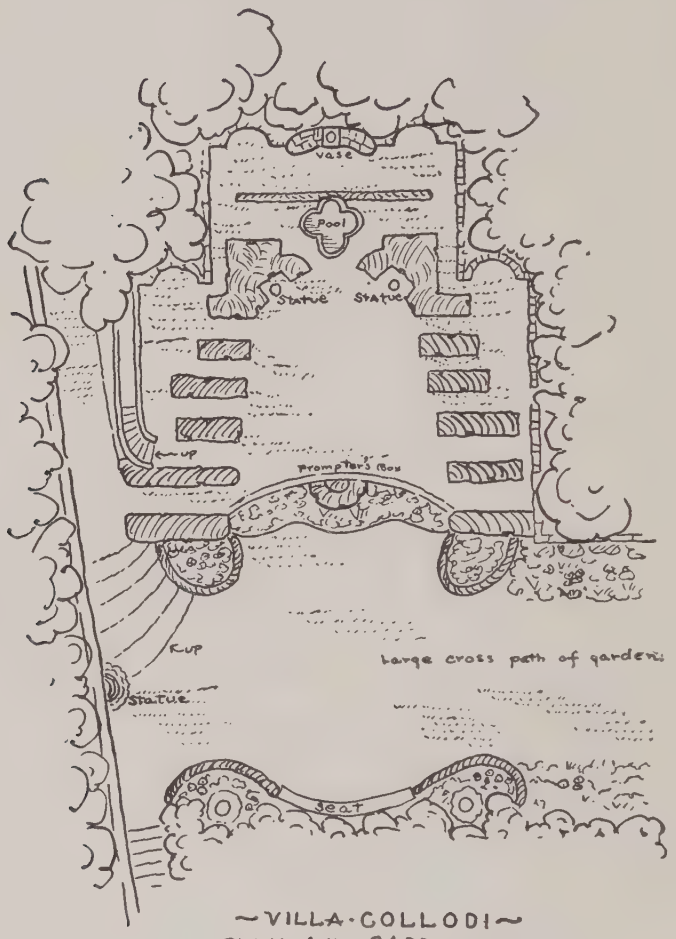
macy and personal relationship fostered by the privacy of the place. Such a psychological condition is necessary to the best results. It is obvious that the best methods of securing this privacy, from



the standpoint of landscape architecture, are to be found in the employment of trees, shrubs, and hedges. Large tree masses are most generally useful. Straightly trimmed hedges with severe outlines and monotonous color masses can certainly be

made very effective under some conditions. Walls of brick or stucco may be desirable for parts of these enclosures under certain circumstances. Since it is the purpose of all these plantings to supply first the background for the spectacle and second a quieting enclosure, the simpler and more monotonous compositions are the better. A vigorous lively composition of highly colored foliage and broken sky line would be highly unsuitable.

One other point, however, needs to be carefully considered in reference to this problem of enclosure. It hardly seems necessary to speak of the question of ventilation in an outdoor theater, and yet as a matter of fact this is often decidedly important. The outdoor theater, especially the commercial "aerdrome," attracts people during the hot summer months largely with the idea of its coolness. There should be, therefore, a free circulation of air throughout the auditorium. If there is any summer breeze blowing the audience is entitled to the benefit of it. Undoubtedly a strict and solid enclosure of the place for purposes of privacy is likely to interfere with this very desirable air circulation.



~VILLA·COLLODI~
PLAN of the GARDEN THEATRE.
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Scale.

Perhaps some compromise of the two requirements would be necessary in certain cases.

Perhaps it will be permissible here to mention another matter of some consequence, viz., the insect nuisance. The plague of mosquitoes is in fact one of the worst practical drawbacks to many an outdoor theater. Civilization, it is true, is making visible progress in abolishing this pest, and perhaps the day will come when we may count it out altogether.

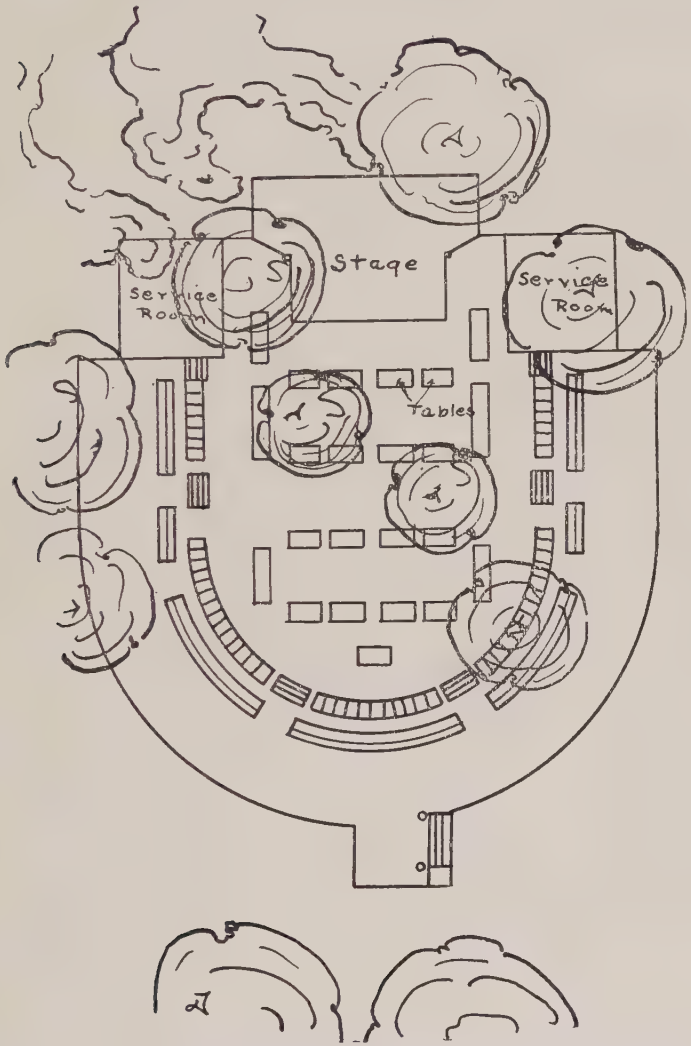
Orientation

An outdoor theater which is to be used at night may have almost any orientation. As many such theaters, however, are used during the daylight hours, more especially during the late afternoon, the position of the sun with reference to the stage and the onlookers becomes of considerable importance. In looking over the outdoor theaters built in various parts of this country, a number are found which have gone wrong at this point. Probably the worst arrangement is that in which the central axis of the theater runs due east and west, with the audience

placed on the eastern end facing westward. Such an arrangement leaves the afternoon sun falling directly in their eyes. This is not merely uncomfortable for the audience, but gives a very poor development of the stage picture.

The opposite arrangement, placing the audience with its back to the sun and the stage at the east, is comfortable for the visitors and presents a fairly good stage picture. The direct sunlight in the eyes of the performers, however, is uncomfortable for them and must interfere with the success of their performance. Moreover it does not give a better stage picture than can be secured with a side light.

Indeed, side lighting, with the sunlight falling upon the stage at an angle of 75 to 90 degrees, undoubtedly gives the best pictorial effect. At the same time it is not objectionable to either audience or performers. For this reason it seems desirable as a general rule, subject to some exceptions based on topography and local conditions, to place an outdoor theater with its axis approximately north and south. Perhaps, as a rule, the audience should be placed at the southern end of this axis with the



"Café Chantant"—Temporary Theater for Charity Bazaar, Brookline, Mass.

stage at the northern end, but this is not a matter of great moment.

Locations

Suitable locations for outdoor theaters are not by any means rare in natural topography. Every once in a while I have my attention directed to some outdoor theater nicely nestled in the bend of a bank, and find that the makers think they have found a unique natural formation for their special benefit. As a matter of fact the concave sloping hillside is rather a common unit in the works of nature. This is to be found frequently along the sides of ravines, at the head of small canyons, etc. In any country which has a rolling or diverse topography a very moderate search will discover places suited for outdoor theaters,—some, of course, better than others.

Wherever possible, advantage should be taken of such natural topography in designing the outdoor theater. However, very good results can be secured even on perfectly flat ground. In such cases some grading may be required, especially for the

GARDEN THEATER UNDER CONSTRUCTION

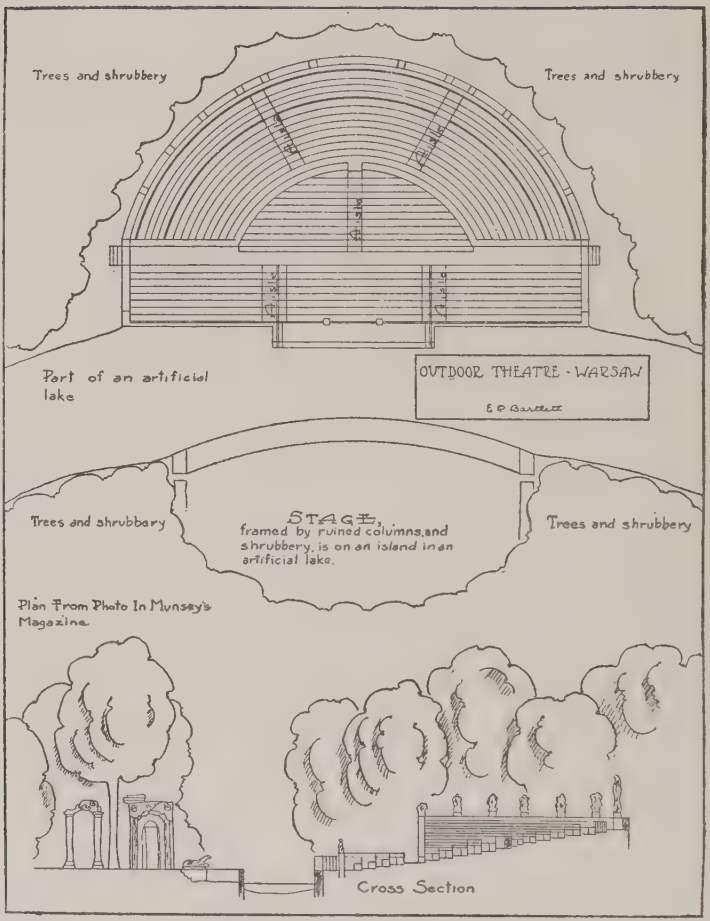
Designed by Jens Jensen

auditorium, though a sloping auditorium is not absolutely necessary, especially in a small theater. The stage will need to be raised to some extent even in small theaters. This may be accomplished by grading or by building a stage.

Seats

At the present time there seems to be a violent whim in possession of the American mind to the effect that an outdoor auditorium must have cement seats. Everywhere ambitious owners of outdoor theaters are trying to find their way to permanent cement benches for the accommodation of audiences. Yet it seems certain that cement is the worst material ever discovered for this purpose. It certainly is the worst from the point of comfort, being the last thing any sane visitor could wish to sit upon; and it is equally bad from the artistic standpoint. Nothing could be less harmonious with the landscape, less pastoral, less sylvan, than rigid cement seats.

The beautiful outdoor theaters of the old Italian


Trees and shrubbery
Trees and shrubbery
Part of an artificial lake
OUTDOOR THEATRE · WARSAW
E. P. Bartlett
Trees and shrubbery
STAGE,
framed by ruined columns and shrubbery, is on an island in an artificial lake.
Trees and shrubbery
Plan From Photo In Munsey's Magazine
Cross Section

OUTDOOR THEATER, WARSAW

villas mostly depended upon grassy terraces for the accommodation of the audiences. Such a terrace, which can be kept sufficiently dry, is perhaps the ideal seating arrangement for the audience in an outdoor theater. Even if the grass is not very good, the banks will still serve. They may be covered with mats of one kind and another which would make them entirely acceptable under most circumstances.

Indeed the development of such comfortable home-made seating facilities becomes a very interesting problem in artistic design. In case of an outdoor theater, for example, surrounded by pine trees, it would be an artistic touch to cover the terrace seats with dry pine leaves. This would be entirely satisfactory also from the standpoint of comfort. In other cases mats could be provided woven from corn husks, rushes, sweet grass, or other native materials. Such mats of course could be taken in between performances and brought out again on occasion.

Probably the most generally satisfactory provision, however, for seating an audience will consist

of wooden seats. These should be made of rough sawed lumber, not dressed. In some cases it will be possible to leave a considerable portion of the bark on timbers sawed for this purpose. Thus logs could be split in half, turned with the flat side up, leaving the bark on, and thus securing a first rate rustic effect. In any circumstances the seats should be very simply designed, always substantial, and never seeking an ornamental effect. The sawed surfaces should be stained with gray or brown neutral stains. In some cases a dull green could be used, harmonizing with the surrounding foliage; in other cases a brown could be used harmonizing with the bark of standing trees.

The Stage

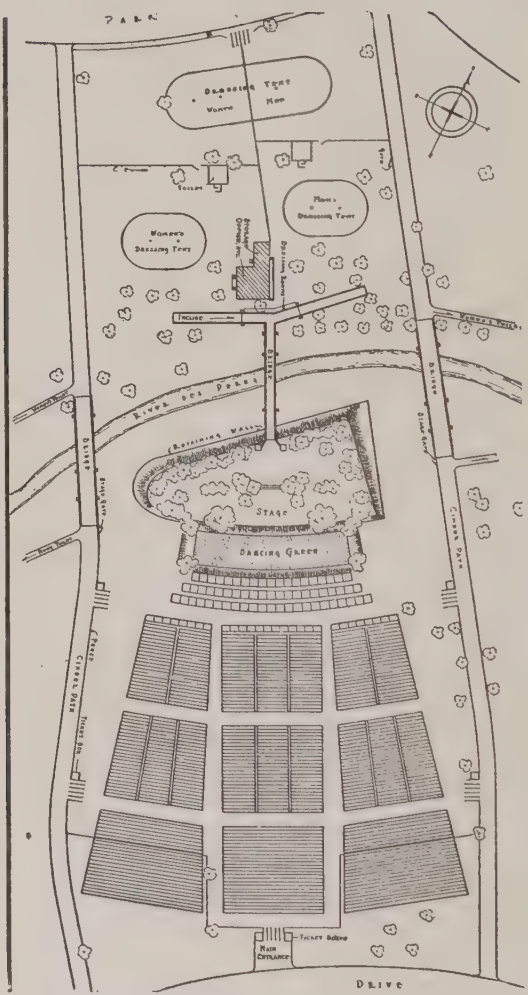
The size of the stage would depend somewhat upon the character of performances to be accommodated; but as it is our present view that pageantry should be provided for in special large theaters quite different from those now under construction, and that the small theater should confine itself to

very simple performances, we need not provide a very extensive stage. Very roughly stated, we may say that a space 15 x 30 feet will be suitable for most small outdoor theaters.

This space should, of course, be level, and preferably should be grassed. Where grass cannot be grown, a smooth earth surface will be best. This may be strewn with pine leaves or some similar local material chosen with care and taste. In some cases a platform built of lumber may seem desirable, though such an artificial structure should not be introduced unless entirely necessary. In more elaborately designed theaters a stage platform may be made of brick work. But under no circumstances should the stage treatment be gaudy or conspicuous.

The stage should present a definite background. In general this should be of a somewhat monotonous neutral and inconspicuous character. We should understand that this is a background and not a part of the performance. It should not attract our attention from singers or actors in any case.

Furthermore this background should complete



FOREST PARK OUT-DOOR THEATRE
Used in Connection with the Shakespearean Pageant
ST. LOUIS — MISSOURI

SEATS
Box Seats 340
Grandstand Chairs 5466
Bleacher Seats 5500
Total 9912

Traced by M.R.Lawrence
January 7 1917

the view. There should not be openings through it where the eye can wander to interesting scenes beyond the stage. It is very important that this stage arrangement should be such as to assist those in the audience in concentrating their thought and attention upon the performance instead of diffusing it to other things. This principle is frequently disregarded in the design of outdoor theaters. It is very often assumed that the audience will be pleased with a fine development of landscape, for example a splendid outlook which they may see from their seats in the auditorium. An outdoor theater, however, is not primarily a place for viewing the landscape. If there are splendid landscape views to be revealed they should be shown from vantage points outside the theater, perhaps from the lobby. But when the audience has finally taken seats in the theater itself and the performers are ready to begin, there should be no competition of interests with what is going on on the stage.

The stage should also be provided with wings such as will assist actors in moving into and out of the scene, and there should be suitable provisions

of privacy for dressing rooms back of the stage. Costuming is of great importance in many of the spectacles to be presented in the outdoor theater, and this, of course, requires suitable dressing-room facilities.

The Foyer

Any theatrical performance should be more or less of a social function. Friends should meet friends at the theater and should have an opportunity for greeting and conversation. In the best playhouses of the old world this is rather fully provided for in attractive foyers and the performance is arranged with long intermissions permitting pleasant social intercourse in them. Unfortunately this custom is not so well developed in America. Whatever may be the situation regarding dramatic or musical performances in ordinary theaters, certainly the outdoor theater should do better. Attendance upon an outdoor performance ought to be distinctly more of a friendly social function than attendance upon a paid performance in a Broadway playhouse. Every one must recognize at once

the superior social advantages of the outdoor theater. Provision should always be made, therefore, for social greeting and friendly circulation of the entire audience. This can best be provided for by one or two definite foyers or promenades directly in connection with the theater plan. They would naturally, however, be placed outside the regular auditorium space, and may be nicely developed in connection with hedges, screens, or similar features of the theater. The trained landscape architect will need nothing more than a suggestion of this sort in order to develop the idea under whatever circumstances may be presented in specific problems.

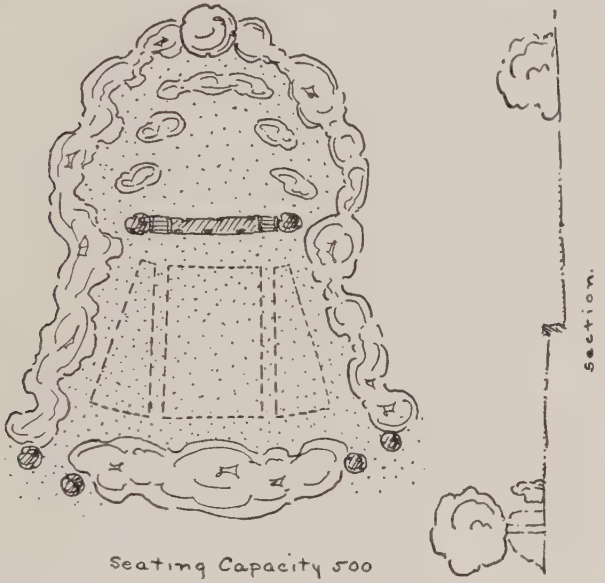
The Proscenium

In the outdoor theater there is, strictly speaking, no proscenium, but while the picture is not so definitely confined by a hard and fast outline, there should be an even more graphic and effective picture presented to the eye. The outdoor theater stage should be quite superior in its pictorial effect. As we have already suggested, this should not be

assertive and gaudy so as to compete with the performance on the stage. We have also already suggested the technical requirement that the stage pictures should be closed and never left open to distracting vistas. Whether it should be definitely formalized or not must rest with the taste of each designer. Undoubtedly some outdoor theaters should be rather distinctly formal. Others should be distinctly informal. Whenever a more or less formal type of design is adopted it should be somewhat emphasized in the treatment of the stage.

In dealing with the stage picture we come naturally to the idea of movable scenery. We are so accustomed to having drop curtains, painted scenes and movable stage effects in our indoor theaters that it is hard to do without them in the outdoor theaters. In general it may be said that such effects should be very greatly minimized on our outdoor stages, and that wherever possible they should be entirely abandoned. It is, of course, possible to have movable backgrounds, and even some stage scenery on an outdoor stage, but everything of this kind should be undertaken with the utmost caution.

Perhaps the best that could be done with movable backgrounds would be to present different color schemes or tone pictures. Thus one performance



Suggestive Design by Miss S. Josephine Strange

might require a bright cheerful color scheme, while another might prosper better with a dull somber background. Movable lattice-work screens into which can be woven cut foliage, or even cut flowers,

would make changes of this kind practicable. In all cases, however, it is better to be extremely cautious and to remember that simplicity is the ideal of all art, and especially of the garden theater.

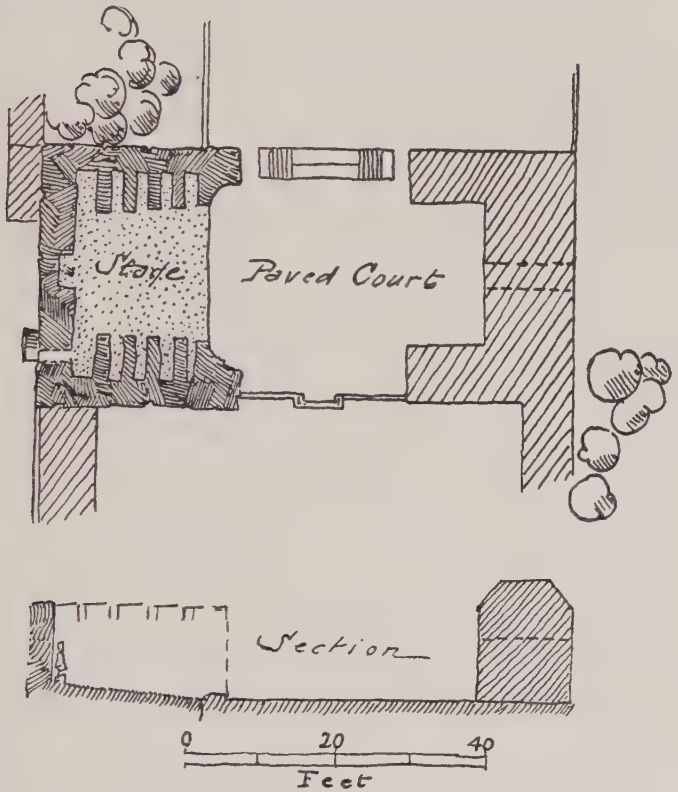
In a few instances designers of garden theaters have felt compelled to supply a curtain for the stage. This is plainly an exceedingly difficult problem, and no solution for it which I have yet seen or heard of can be regarded as artistically successful. The makeshift is too obvious. It will be better, in most cases certainly, to be quite frank with the audience and omit the curtain.

Furnishings

Aside from what has already been spoken of, the outdoor theater does not need many furnishings. Some very simple vase forms or painted columns may be desirable in setting off the stage, or in marking the entrances and exits. The old Italian theaters nearly always introduced marble statuary. Such furnishings, however, do not seem especially suited to American outdoor theaters,

both because we are unaccustomed to them, and because we do not have good material available.

A rather frequent technical device has been the



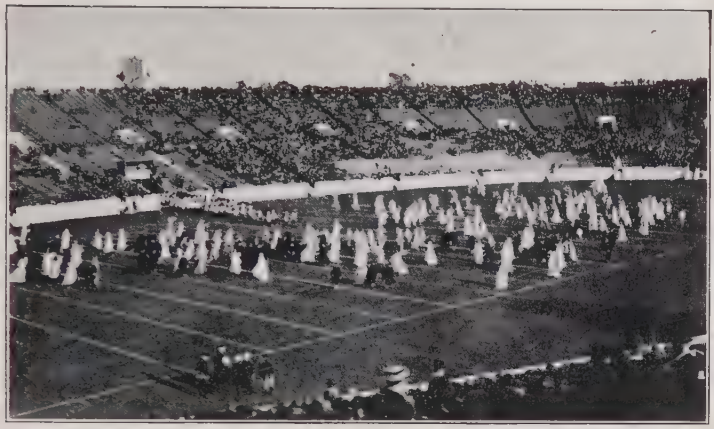
THE GARDEN THEATER, SEGARDI, NEAR SIENA

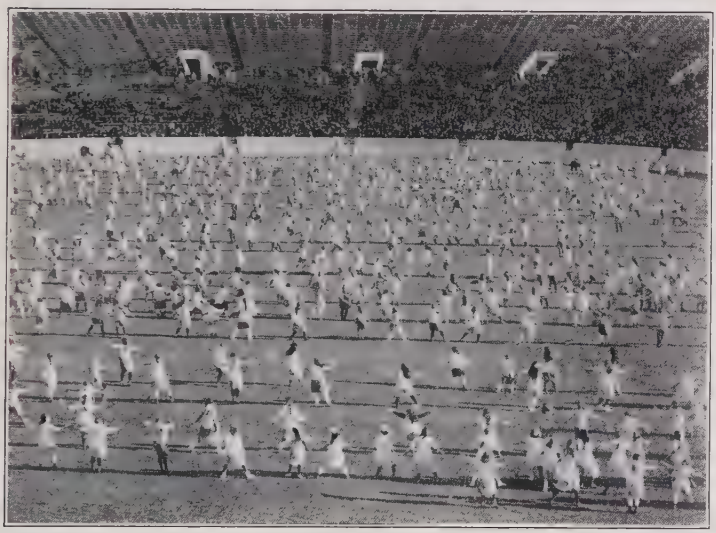
insertion of a pool or strip of water in front of the stage. This may have a very attractive effect in some cases, especially when the stage is lighted with flambeaux, so that the stage lights are reflected in the pool for the audience. In general, however, such a pool serves to mark a separation between the audience and the performers, and for this reason is undesirable in small intimate garden theaters.

In this connection, while we are speaking of furnishings, it may be worth while to say a word in favor of attractive entrance gateways. A garden theater should have a garden gate or entrance, and any designer will find ample play for his imagination at this point. While elaborate distracting ornamental effects within the theater are undesirable, the gateway might properly have a much more florid treatment.

Lighting

Evening use of the garden theater of course involves some method of lighting. The universal temptation is to run in a wire and use electricity.





TWO VIEWS OF A PAGEANT IN THE YALE BOWL

The inartistic decorator may even try to get "ornamental effects" in electric lighting.

The electric light however is so clearly artificial and so suggestive of the indoor world as to be distinctly inappropriate to the sylvan theater. In some cases, to be sure, it may seem to be the best that can be found, when certainly it should be made as inconspicuous as possible. If a wholly indirect system of lighting is employed, no electric bulbs or arcs being visible anywhere, the results need not be objectionable.

An open burning light is obviously the most natural kind of illumination. The simplest sort of torches would give the best artistic effect.

In this connection there is to be noted, quite parenthetically, the symbolism of the naked fire, as of water, both features being artistically very effective at the proper points.

Flambeaux of various kinds are appropriate to the outdoor theater. Gas flambeaux can be advantageously used in some cases. In other places it will be proper to employ kerosene flambeaux somewhat after the type formerly used by all political

clubs in presidential campaigns.

It hardly needs to be said that in any case where open lights are used, they must be placed first in such a manner as to light the stage, and second in such positions as to form an effective feature in the theater design. Open lights will always be very conspicuous.

Acoustics

In all theater plans a great deal of attention is paid to acoustics. Nevertheless this is understood to be something of a gamble, even amongst the best architects. Outdoor theaters differ considerably with regard to acoustic properties, but in general it is surprisingly easy in any of them to hear what is said or sung on the stage. For the present it does not seem possible to give any rules for insuring acoustic success. If we follow the principles herein laid down and endeavor to make every garden theater as small and intimate as possible, we shall never be seriously troubled with the problem of hearing the words of the performers.

III

SELECTED EXAMPLES

"BANKSIDE"

THE college campus seems to be the natural habitat of the outdoor theater. Probably more good outdoor theaters have been built for colleges than for any other surroundings, and probably the college theaters are more used than most others. Certainly one of the best examples of the college theater out-of-doors is "Bankside" at the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks.

One reason why this enterprise has been so successful is that it started from the proper end, that is from the standpoint of the playwright and play producer. In too many cases an outdoor theater has first been built, after which the neighbors have looked about wistfully to see what kind of performance could be raked up for presentation in the pretty auditorium which they had provided. In the University of North Dakota, however, Professor Frederick H. Koch has from the first spe-

cialized upon drama. Moreover, instead of paying attention chiefly to the historical development of the drama or to studies of the masters long since dead, he has endeavored to build up a modern, vital, dramatic feeling and expression amongst his pupils. He has endeavored to teach the technic of acting. Instead of devoting his time chiefly to library study he has tried to build up a working laboratory of modern drama.

In order to carry out any such splendid plans as these it has been necessary of course to have some sort of auditorium in which the acting could be done. Some very interesting experiments with indoor theaters he made, which, however, need not concern us now. Our interest centers upon the discovery and the development of "Bankside." In the turn of a small coulee the concave side supplied a desirable position for a stage with the usual advantageous slope for an auditorium on the convex side. A desirable background was supplied to the stage by plantings of small trees and shrubbery.

This arrangement of an outdoor theater in which the stage is separated from the auditorium by a

FIRST PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE IN THE BANKSIDE THEATER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

strip of water has been used several times elsewhere, as in the famous theater at Warsaw, and most notably on the pageant grounds of the great pageant held in St. Louis in 1913. Pictorially such an arrangement is always effective, especially at night when the lights of the stage are reflected in the water. The acoustic properties seem to be all that could be desired, at least when the strip of water is not too wide.

The main objection to an arrangement of this sort comes from the artistic side of the drama itself and lies in the separation of the audience from the actors. In practically all dramatic performances it is a fundamental effort on the part of the actors to identify themselves as closely as possible with the audience,—to come into the most intimate possible terms with them. The obvious physical separation of the two parties engenders a certain psychological separation which operates as a more or less serious handicap upon the actor.

This theater having been conspicuously successful, many suggestions for its improvement have been made. One of the most frequent and cer-

tainly one of the most questionable improvements suggested has been an amphitheater of cement seats. Up to the present time no permanent seating arrangements have been provided, but we may certainly hope that something better than cement will eventually be found.

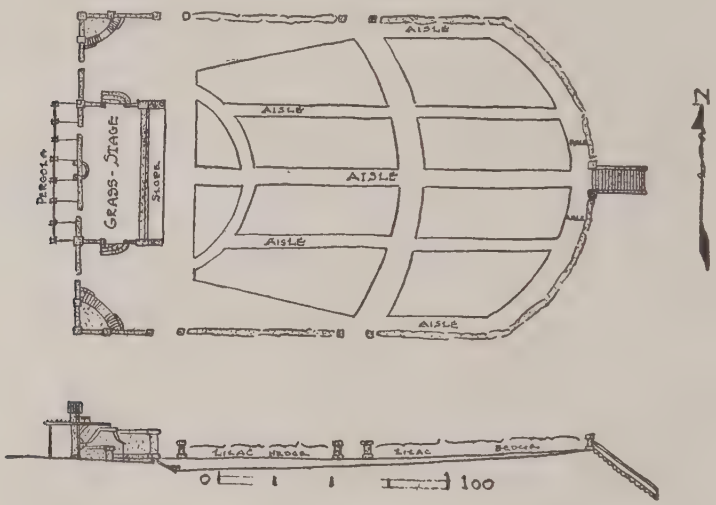
This theater has been very successfully used by the Coburn Players and in several performances of local talent. As already stated its prime importance lies in its availability as a laboratory for Professor Koch's work in dramatic writing and production.

"GARDEN TERRACE THEATER"

AT Yankton College, Yankton, S. Dak., is an outdoor theater of unusually pleasing design. It is built in a grove of small trees on perfectly level land. It is outlined in the form of a simple parallelogram, bounded on the sides by low hedges, at the back by an architectural terrace, and on the front by the terraced and balustraded stage. The plan given herewith (page 70) and the photographs give a very good idea of the whole.

The design was prepared by Mr. Phelps Wyman, landscape architect, of Minneapolis, Minn., in consultation with an architect. It was constructed by private initiative. Although it is built upon the College grounds and is used primarily by the College, four members of the faculty joined with three business men of the town to finance the construction. The work cost $4,500, and though this was more than expected, it would seem to be

a small price to pay for so fine an auditorium. Occasional paid performances have helped to pay off the initial cost, and it is expected that the theater will soon be free of debt.



Elizabethan Theater, Yankton College

This enterprise has been made successful largely through the work of Professor George H. Durand, vice-president of the College. Professor Durand's own account of the results is so interesting that I venture to quote from his letters. He says:

THE "GARDEN TERRACE THEATER"
"MERCHANT OF VENICE" AND "AS YOU LIKE IT"

"We had to depend on income from the theater to gradually pay off the debt. The first season we had bad luck with weather, but made about enough on one main performance, the Shakespeare Play at Commencement, to pay the interest. The second season, just past, we had the Shakespeare Play, one performance, and the Pageant of Yankton, three performances, and netted on the four about $900, which paid up our interest and reduced the principal. We now feel very confident of the enterprise financially.

"We aim to give only high class things. Such an attraction as the Coburn Players, which we had last June with good weather and everything favorable, did not yield us any profit, but it made a delightful performance. Mr. Coburn thinks the Garden Terrace Theater is the most beautiful and practicable open-air theater in the country. But we perceive that we must look to our home talent and community affairs to yield us the needful profits.

"Our Shakespeare Play is a thoroughly established annual event and the public expects and

always gets a fine production. Our people also are enthusiastic over pageants, and we shall give more of them in the future. The pageant, with leadership from among the faculty, gathers in the forces of the community generally, and we think is a splendid thing in every way.

"We expect to use the Garden Terrace Theater now and then for some free community entertainment. For instance, I am now proposing to our public schools an exhibition of folk dancing as taught in our schools, to be given along in May or June.

"We have not yet used the Garden Terrace Theater for a regular musical performance, although we have had orchestra accompaniment for some of our plays and the pageant. We had a concert scheduled last year by the United States Marine Band, but on account of bad weather had to hold it indoors. We intended from the beginning to use the Garden Terrace Theater for musical entertainments, and shall certainly do so as we have opportunity.

"The acoustic properties of the Garden Terrace

Theater are a surprise to every one. At the extreme rear, 180 feet from the stage, an ordinary stage or platform voice is perfectly clear and satisfactory. I think a victrola could be heard well from any part of the auditorium.

"I understand that this matter of open-air acoustics is in an experimental stage as yet. Before we adopted our design we had the advice of Professor Sargent of Harvard, who was recommended to me by Professor George P. Baker as being the chief authority on the subject and able to chase a sound wave around among the trees with considerable certainty. Professor Sargent believed that our plan would give excellent acoustic results. His explanation was that the rear wall, together with the trees back of it, and especially their overarching form, would have the right effect in throwing the sound just where it was wanted. This effect would be improved, he said, with the growth and overarching of the younger trees encircling the auditorium.

"As to orientation, I judge that most open-air theaters are located and oriented according to topo-

graphical and other conditions which must often over-rule the question of sun for afternoon performances. With us nearly all performances will be in the evening, the effects to be gained at night by artificial lighting being so exceedingly beautiful. One performance of our pageant was in the afternoon of a cloudless day in June, but no one felt discomfort of the sun. By our orientation of audience facing west we secured the background of trees which makes so beautiful a scene, and also the acoustic qualities I have indicated."

POMONA COLLEGE THEATER

THEY call it a "Greek" theater at Pomona, and look forward to an elaborate architectural development at some time in the future. Meanwhile they actually have a most charming Californian auditorium—a native wine which needs no classic bush—and one is forced to wonder whether the present simplicity is not after all better suited to the century and the country than any intricate and diverting scheme of architecture which might be built.

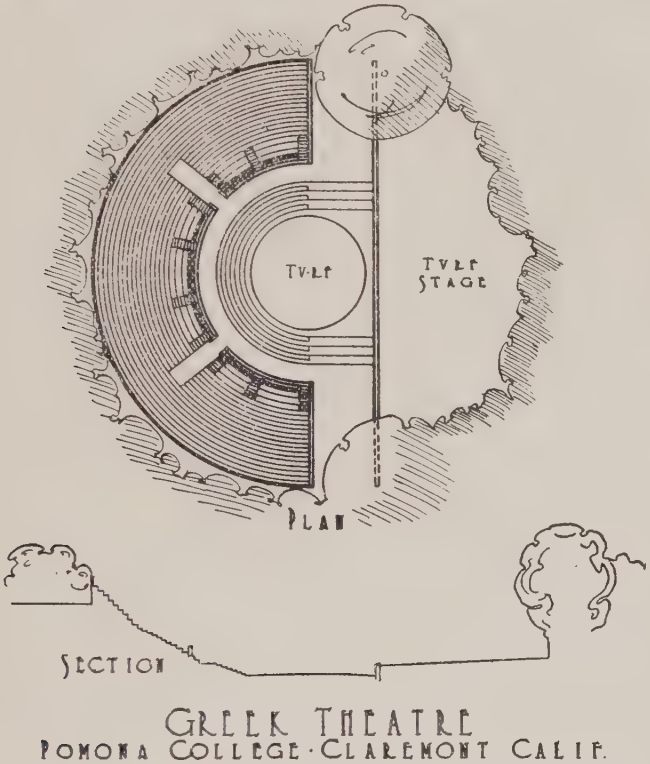
This theater had the happy fortune to grow up with the College. It came because there was a real demand for it in the college life. Developing thus in response to a clearly understood purpose, the theater had a meaning from the first. Such a genesis is always to be preferred. In too many instances the theater has been built first and the demand for its use created afterward. Some account of the development of this theater idea at

Pomona is given by Professor C. B. Sumner in his "Story of Pomona College," from which the following extracts are taken:

"The idea of a Greek theater has been a growth, the natural outcome of prevailing conditions. In the earliest years the graduating classes had some kind of fun-producing entertainment on Tuesday afternoon of Commencement week, out in the 'Wash.' Later this gave place to an evening entertainment more or less informal. For a few years each graduating class gave a play with local coloring. At present the 'Wash Program' takes the form of a play written by one or more members of the class. These gatherings continued to be on the Mesa, were free to all, and became universally popular, drawing thousands of spectators. At length the increasing size of the audience made it necessary to seat them upon the sloping side of the Mesa instead of upon the top. After a while it became difficult to arrange seats even there, so that all could see and hear. Thus arose the suggestion of an out-of-door auditorium, a place where not only this entertainment but many other large

SCENES PRESENTED ON THE STAGE OF THE COLLEGE THEATER, POMONA COLLEGE, CALIFORNIA

gatherings during the year might be held. Hardly had the alumni completed the athletic field when



GREEK THEATRE
POMONA COLLEGE · CLAREMONT CALIF.

they began to talk and plan for such an auditorium. The class of 1910 took up the matter seriously, and

subscribed twenty-five hundred dollars with which to start the enterprise by securing an architect and building the stage. Mr. Myron Hunt undertook to make the plans. He studied the style of architecture, visited the Greek theater at the University of California, and finally presented plans which were adopted. They contemplate a very extensive and beautiful structure to include, when completed, spacious reception rooms; a very large stage with all needed dressing and retiring rooms, and arranged with a background of live oak trees; an auditorium adapted to small audiences of a few hundred and to audiences of four or five thousand, with every convenience; the whole to be ultimately embellished with stately columns, colonnades, cornices, and various ornamentation producing a rich and imposing effect.

"The location has been so selected that hardly a tree has been injured, and at the same time advantage has been taken of some fine trees at the rear of the stage, happily situated for scenic effect and for shade. Tall-growing eucalyptus trees are being set out to afford full shade in due time. The

plan embraces entrances through tunnels from the College side on the west, while the main entrances are to be on the front, at the northeast and southeast corners. The front when finished is to be quite elaborate, reserving the trees for a background. Ornamental grounds for parking automobiles have been arranged."

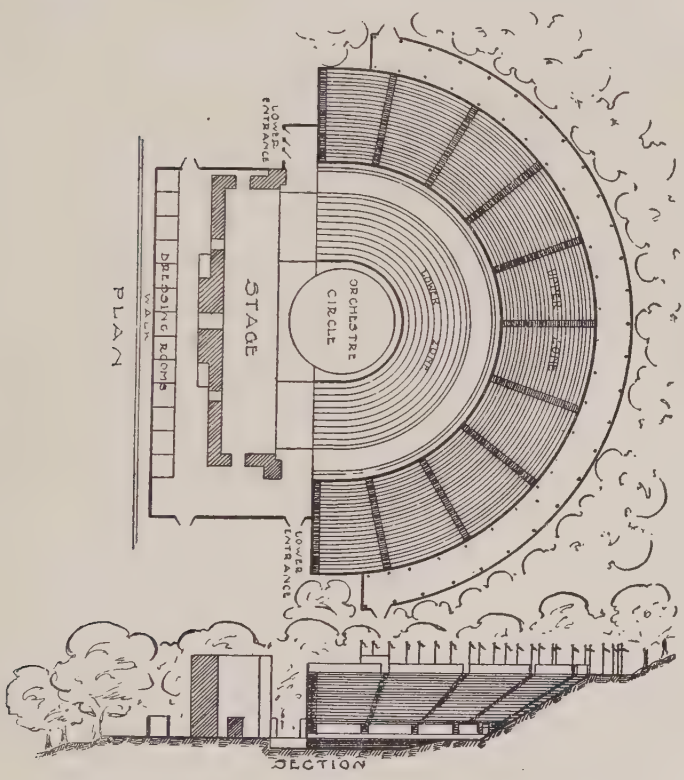
GREEK THEATER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

UNQUESTIONABLY the most famous outdoor theater in the United States is the one at the University of California, Berkeley. So much has been published with respect to this particular enterprise that no extended account of it could be justified here. The plan and section on page 81 are from a measured drawing made by my friend and former pupil, Professor J. W. Gregg, of the University of California. The following account of the theater itself is slightly condensed from a statement by Mr. V. H. Henderson: *

At the University of California the graduating class year after year gave its Class Day extravaganza in a natural amphitheater among the hills, the thousands of spectators sitting on the rising

* From the *Outlook* of August, 1904, with the permission of the editors.

slopes under the shadow of great eucalyptus and cypress trees. Then came the thought, made act by Mr. William R. Hearst's generosity, of build-



GREEK THEATRE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

ing a theater such as that at Epidaurus, open to a sky blue like that of Greece, leaning against lofty hills, and hospitable for play or music or festival day throughout a constant year that knows no winter.

The Greek theater at Berkeley has become a place of pilgrimage. Not less than ten thousand people go up across the campus and through the encalyptus grove during every week to delight their eyes with its classic dignity and restful charm. And to see it once is to come again and again, to enjoy it with ever fresh delight, as one would a painting or a statue or a song. Every Sunday afternoon at five the students make music there for half an hour—the glee club, the orchestra, the band, the choral society, or some other undergraduate musical organization—and four or five thousand people listen to this music—music as free to all who choose to come as the singing of birds or the sound of the wind in the trees with which it is intermingled. There, sometimes, the students give plays—"The Birds" of Aristophanes in Greek, Racine's "Phèdre" in French, the Class Day play

of their own making; there Ben Greet's players presented "Twelfth Night," there concerts are given, there President Roosevelt delivered the Commencement address, there the students build bonfires and set off fireworks and hold rallies by night and by day in celebration of athletic victories. Eight thousand people can sit there together, and each one feels that he has chanced upon the best seat of all, for the Greek type of theater is ideal for seeing and for hearing, and it brings an audience into unity and into enjoyment of its own self as an audience and as a spectacle as can no other form of assemblage-place.

Free design marked the work of John Galen Howard, the Supervising Architect of the University of California, in the imagining of the theater and in its wedding to the surrounding hills and groves; but there is archæological warrant for its every detail, from the different pitch of the inner and outer circles of tiers, suggested by the theater at Epidaurus, to the rain-gutters about the orchestra, which drain like those at Corinth.

The theater itself consists of two series of semi-

circular tiers, rising first at a gentle angle, and then, after an intervening aisle and low wall, by a bolder slope. From the highest tier one steps out upon the natural hillside. The nineteen tiers of the outer portion, each eighteen inches high, are both step and seat. The arc of the outer semicircle measures two hundred and fifty feet.

The stage is tangent to the circular open orchestra about which the tiers are disposed, and stands five feet and a half above it. It is a hundred and fifty feet in length, twenty-eight feet deep, and backed by a massive wall forty-two feet in height. This noble wall, enriched with sixteen columns and with stylobate and entablature in full Doric detail, represents a palace or temple front. It is pierced by a great central doorway, flanked by smaller openings, and with a portal as well in each of the return walls. The theater is built of concrete, the stage wall being finished by hand in Portland cement.

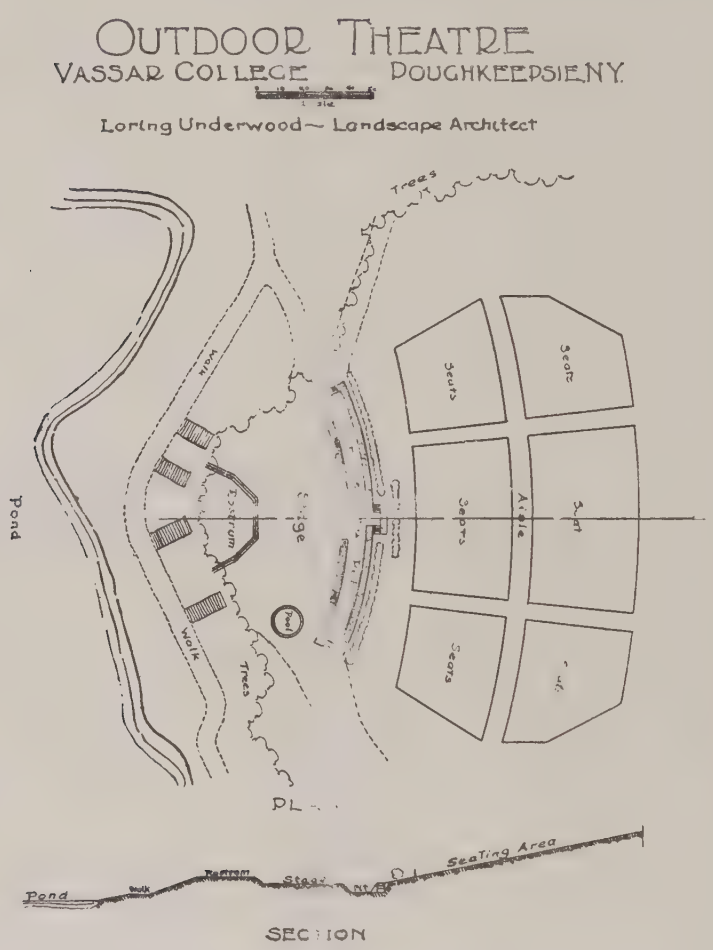
The theater has proved of a great practical usefulness as a place of assemblage for the University.

VASSAR COLLEGE

ONE of the latest and best college theaters is that at Vassar, designed by Mr. Loring Underwood, landscape architect, of Boston. The plan (page 86) and pictures of this fine auditorium will repay careful study. The following description of the work is supplied by the landscape architect's office.

The theater was built at one end of the campus, and under the present arrangements will seat thirty-five hundred people. It was built because the College needed a place for pageants and outdoor entertainments, and also for commencement exercises. The rostrum is large enough to stage the small plays given by the Dramatic Club; at such times the stage is used for the audience.

Roughly, the theater is a large bowl cut into the hillside and tipped toward the new lake; it has for a background a planting of large spruce trees. The rostrum is close against the trees and


OUTDOOR THEATRE
VASSAR COLLEGE POUGHKEEPSIE N.Y.
Loring Underwood— Landscape Architect
Trees
Seats
Seats
Seats
Seats
Seats
Aisle
Main
Walk
Pond
Trees
Pond
Walk
Seating Area

SECTION

TWO VIEWS OF THE STAGE OF THE VASSAR COLLEGE THEATER

Designed by Loring Underwood.

Photographs copyright by Edmund L. Wolven

about one and one-half feet higher than the stage, which extends to the front and sides of the rostrum. The stage and orchestra pit are separated from the main part of the theater by a circular hemlock hedge four feet high, which screens the directors of the performances and the musicians from the audience.

The audience is seated on portable folding chairs, which have the back legs cut off so that they will fit the slope. These chairs are placed in rows in the seating area shown on the plan. These chairs are stored in a nearby building, so, when the theater is not in use, it gives the appearance of a natural dished hillside well covered with turf, which can be cut with an ordinary lawn mower.

A piece of iron pipe with an iron ring cemented into it has been sunk into the ground at each corner of the seating area so that the bottom of the ring is flush with the ground. A white painted rope is strung through the rings before the chairs are placed, thus lining out the seating area. The chairs are then placed in rows and the ropes removed.

The steps into the orchestra pit, to the rostrum, and from the walk up to the rostrum and stage, are made of old railroad ties, well weathered, set flush in the banks. These wooden risers and turf treads make good flights of steps.

On the right of the stage a small plain cement pool, about ten feet in diameter, was built. The stage and seating area slope toward the orchestra pit, which is drained by three catch basins connected with a line of six-inch pipe; the six-inch pipe is in turn connected with a line of eight-inch pipe which passes under the walk into the lake.

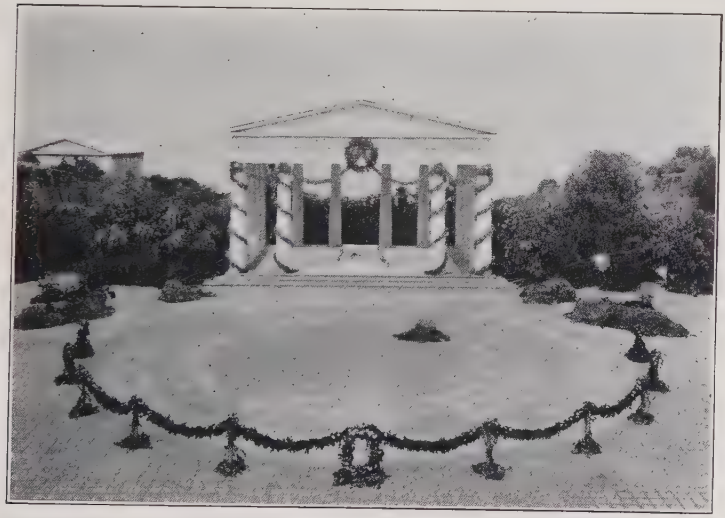
The first large pageant, with some four hundred girls taking part, was held in the theater in October, 1915. This was in celebration of Founders' Day. Part of the commencement exercises last June were also held here.

"ISIS THEATER"

ONE of the most elaborate, beautiful and successful outdoor theaters in the United States is probably the Isis Theater, at the International Theosophical Headquarters, Point Loma, Cal. This claims to be the first truly Greek theater built in America. It has been in use for several years and has justly received considerable notice.

Isis Theater is situated in the throat of a short dry arroyo fronting directly out upon the open Pacific Ocean. The natural amphitheater formed by the head of the arroyo has been graded to support the cement seats swinging in wide semicircles. The orchestra floor is paved in circular pattern work. At the back of the stage an exceedingly beautiful and refined Doric temple forms the focus and background of the stage picture. Beyond this the long level horizon of the ocean is visible for many miles.

On the left bank of the canyon another building, also in Doric orders, provides for the music.



TWO VIEWS OF "ISIS THEATER," POINT LOMA, CALIFORNIA

Copyright by Mme. Katherine Tingley

This building, though near enough to make the music fairly audible, is partially concealed from the onlookers in the theater itself.

The picture presented to the eye from the seats of the Isis Theater is magnificent and impressive in the extreme. Probably no other theater in the world ever approached the Isis Theater in these qualities. One must feel, however, that the very splendor of this setting detracts to a degree from any performance which can be given on the stage. It would require stage costuming and stage acting of extraordinary merit to make any spectator forget that long yearning horizon of the Pacific; and even at the best one's attention would frequently wander, first to the architectural poem of the Greek temple, and then, without let of the actors, to the rippling blue of the wide ocean.

The orientation of this theater is distinctly inconvenient for all afternoon performances. The amphitheater faces almost exactly to the west, thus making the theater pit unpleasantly warm on all afternoons unless it happens to be decisively cooled by sea breezes. Moreover the sun falls directly in

the eyes of the visitors on the seats, while the actors on the stage are presented in dark silhouettes and the marble temple itself turns its shaded side to the audience.

The acoustic qualities of the theater, like those of every other outdoor theater without exception, are spoken of as remarkable. In this instance it is claimed that some secret details of construction have assisted materially in the acoustic results.

Isis Theater was designed and built under the immediate supervision of Mme. Katherine Tingley, head of the International Theosophical Society at Point Loma, by whose kind personal permission the accompanying photographs are reproduced.

"THE RHODODENDRON GARDEN"

ON the grounds of the Massachusetts Agricultural College the author has designed and constructed a small social garden which has come to be known as the "Rhododendron Garden." This was originally intended to provide for social events of various kinds. The regular College commencement has been held in this garden on several successive Junes. A movable stage is provided from which the speaking is done while the audience is seated upon chairs brought into the grounds for this occasion.

The same grounds have been used for Shakespearean performances, for exhibitions of dancing, for public demonstrations by the Camp-fire Girls and the Boy Scouts, for regular courses of lectures in the Summer School and for many miscellaneous events.

In its structural design the "Rhododendron Garden" is the extreme of simplicity. The ground was

already furnished with a number of large and interesting shade trees when it was taken in hand by the present designer. A heavy border of shrubbery—for a part of the distance a double border—

"Rhododendron Garden," Massachusetts Agricultural College

was placed around the outside to secure privacy. A considerable area of open lawn, somewhat concave in conformation, occupies the principal space. Smaller areas partially segregated from the main lawn offer convenient opportunities for placing the

orchestra at a large meeting; or they are large enough to take care of small groups when the large lawn is not required. Another feature is an attractive entrance way in the form of a rose-covered garden gate.

Pleasing features of this plan are its simplicity, its privacy, and its adaptability to a great variety of uses.

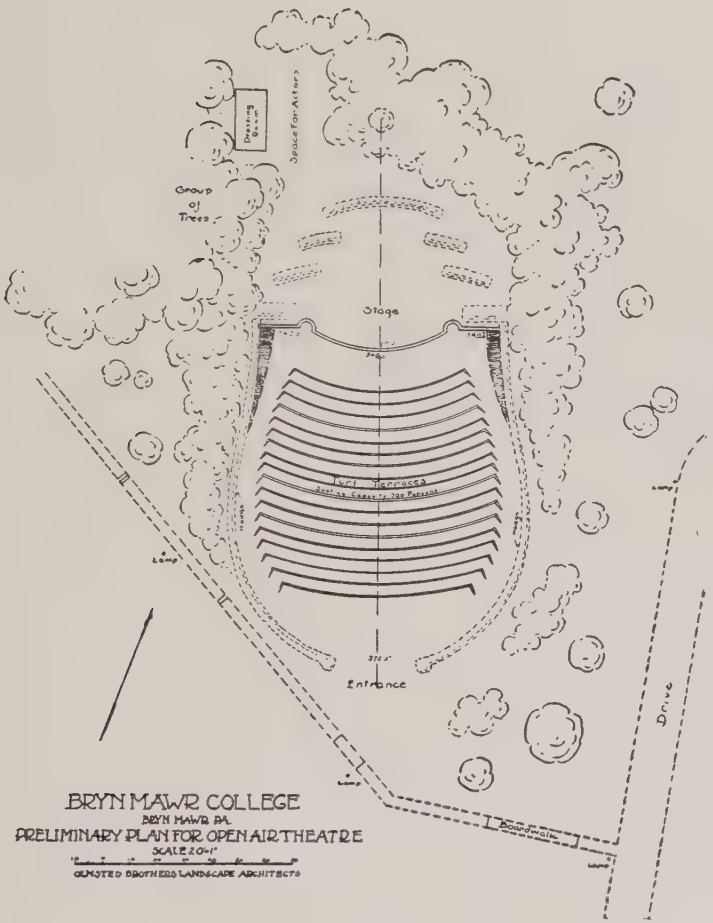
BRYN MAWR

HEREWITH is reproduced a most attractive design for a garden theater in the campus of Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania. The design is by Olmsted Brothers, landscape architects, of Brookline, Mass.

One of the requirements in this plan was that the arrangement should be as nearly as possible like that of an indoor theater. This was with a view to facilitating the transfer of indoor plays to outdoor surroundings. The seating plan of the indoor theater is preserved, and this feature might prove convenient at times.

The intention was that each row of seats should have a separate turf terrace, the seats to be movable camp chairs or folding benches brought out for each performance.

This design is sufficiently interesting to justify its reproduction, even though, unfortunately, we may think, it has not yet been carried out.

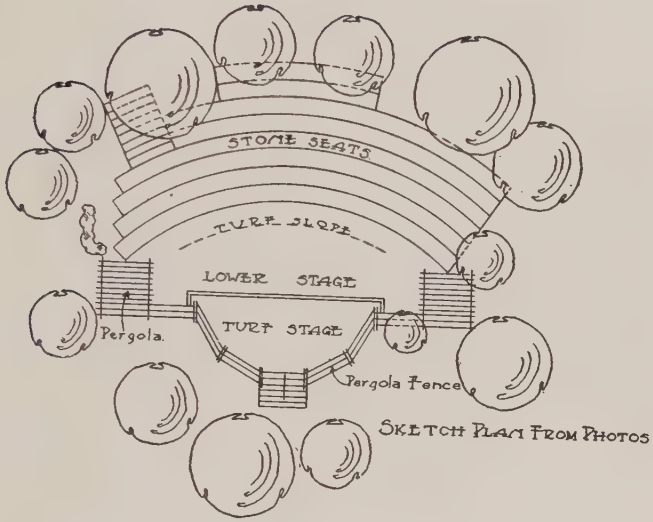

Dressing Rooms
Space for Artists
Group of Trees
Stage
Turf Terraces
Entrance
Drive
BRYN MAWR COLLEGE
BRYN MAWR PA.
PRELIMINARY PLAN FOR OPEN AIR THEATRE
SCALE 20=1'
OLMSTED BROTHERS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

"BROOKSIDE"

PRACTICALLY speaking, one of the most successful outdoor theaters anywhere is "Brookside," built and managed by Miss Marcia Leonard, at Mt. Kisco, N. Y. Advantage was taken in this theater, as in so many others, of a natural concavity in the side of a low hill, and in this hollow a simple and convenient seating was arranged.

In front of this lies a level grass-covered stage without any floral or architectural elaboration except for the pergola-like background. This pergola is simple, almost to the point of meagerness. Yet it serves, with the reinforcement of some small trees and other foliage masses, to make a very good background for the stage.

The stage is small, very near the spectators, very simple and very intimate. These are qualities of the utmost artistic consequence. On this stage players, dancers or singers never have to compete



"Brookside," Mt. Kisco, N. Y.

with elaborate effects of horticulture and architecture; neither do they have to struggle heavily across structural barriers interposed between them and their audiences. The orientation is good, as a pleasing stage lighting is secured while the after-

"Brookside," Mt. Kisco, N. Y.

noon sun streams comfortably over the shoulders of visitors on the benches.

So far as I know, "Brookside" is the only outdoor theater properly so called which has been regularly used for the commercial production of plays, music and other similar material. Miss Leonard, however, has managed this theater through three

successful seasons. The program of 1914 may be recorded as a fine example of the uses of the outdoor theater. It was as follows:

May 30, Decoration Day. "Orpheus." Music by Gluck; dances arranged and executed by Florence Fleming Noyes and pupils.

June 6. The Misses Hoyt in a program of tableaux-chantants.

June 13. The Electra of Sophocles; incidental music by Moussorgsky.

June 20. Miss Ruth St. Denis in Eastern dances and impersonations.

June 27. "Pinkie and the Fairies," a play for children and grown-ups.

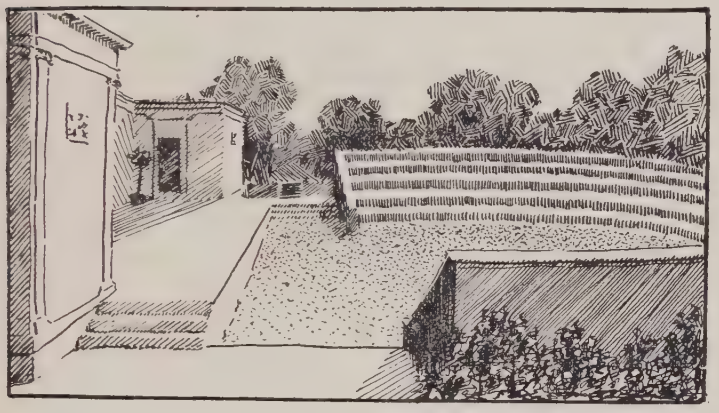
July 4. Variety Entertainment.

"CRANBROOK"

ONE of the newest of the outdoor theaters, and one of the most refined in design, is Cranbrook. This was designed by Mr. Marcus R. Burrowes, architect for Mr. George G. Booth of Detroit. This may fairly be called a Greek theater, although no attempt has been made to reach an excessive classicism in detail. The theater is built on the farm of Mr. George G. Booth, at Bloomfield Hills near Detroit. While it is entirely under private ownership, it is expected that it will be used by local dramatic and musical societies. The following account of this theater is clipped from the Boston *Transcript* of May 6, 1916:

"The theater is set on a hill in the midst of an extensive garden. Or rather than garden, it is a farm de luxe, with farm and meadow lands, cattle, sheep, goats, dogs, horses and so on, 'for the very earthy,' together with many other delights to the

senses, such as kitchen gardens, walled fruit gardens, formal and wild, and bogs for orchids and water flowers, all to 'round out one person or to meet the special interest of each.' This character of friendly idleness is somehow carried out in the

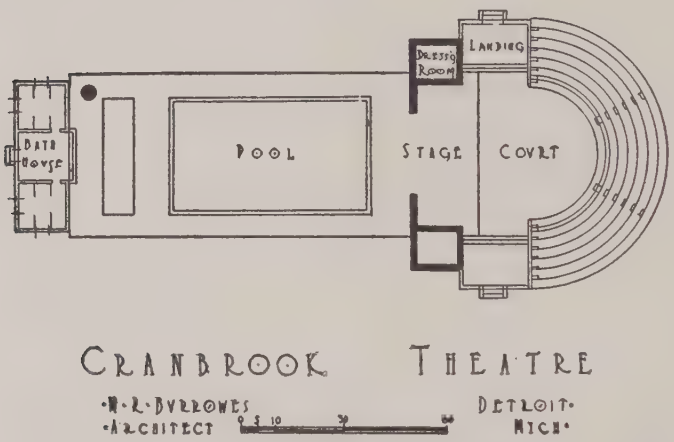


"Cranbrook"—The Orchestra

architecture of the theater. This reproduces in stone the chief characteristics and proportions of the Greek theater at Syracuse in Sicily, but in reducing the dimensions the architect has managed to get quite rid of the austerity of the original. The theater as it stands, with its roomy stage and its grass 'orchestra,' with its seats in friendly prox-

imity to the actor, invites the intimate type of dramatic production which American little theaters have chiefly housed.

"Instead of the conventional temple portal the back wall of the stage contains three openings.



These may be curtained for the performance. But through them, when the 'house is dark,' can be seen the inviting swimming pool which Mr. Booth has provided perhaps for use and certainly for adornment. This is symbolic as well as decorative, for Greek drama was never far removed from athletic games.

"Thanks to luck and to careful planning, the acoustics of the little theater are admirable. A few months ago the Misses Fuller sang some of

"Cranbrook"—Exterior Embellishments

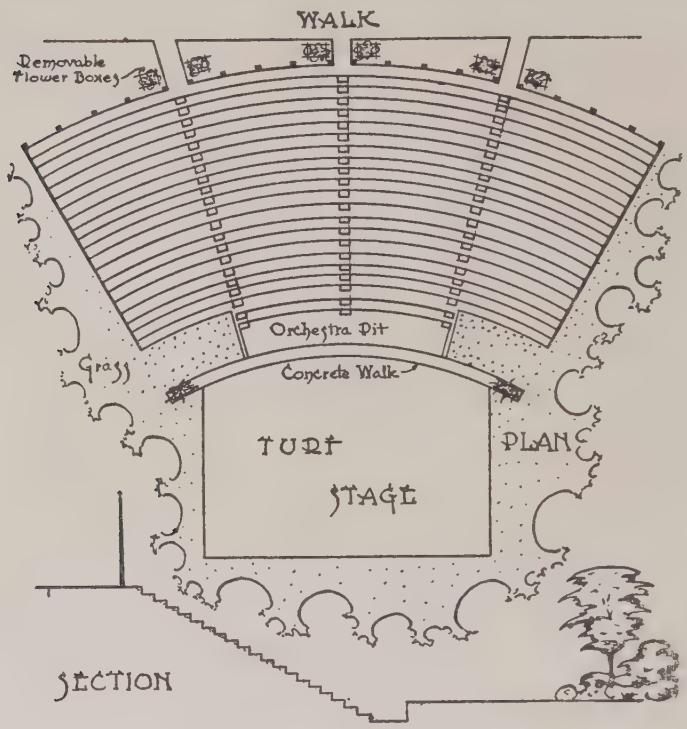
their English folk-melodies there, and of the performance a recorder says: 'There, in the face of a strong wind and in "citizens' " clothes, they sang a variety of their songs and then, going back of the stage and pool to the pavilion, they sang in half-voice several of the Gaelic melodies and songs of the Hebrides. Every note was perfectly audible. The music seemed also to take on an unearthly quality. The sound was held and the very mood given back by the setting. It was like the loveliness of a thing imagined.' The sponsors assert that the swimming pool is a beneficent aid to the acoustics."

A REAL MUNICIPAL THEATER

COMMUNITY drama is looked upon by some as one of the great coming social movements. Certain it is that most attempts at community drama and pageantry have given the happiest social results. This experience has been especially marked in the town of Anoka, Minnesota, with a population of a little over four thousand.

Anoka is situated on the picturesque banks of the Rum River, and at a point where this stream circles in near to one of the principal streets advantage has been taken of the usual concave bank to build the not unusual cement stadium seats. At the foot of the bank the level space has been used for the development of an attractive stage. In this case the river runs behind the stage and is visible from the seats of the spectators, instead of running between the stage and the spectators, as in some other outdoor theaters.

The Anoka theater was built in 1915 from the designs by Purcell & Elmslie, architects, of Min-



OPEN AIR THEATRE
ANOKA, MINN.

neapolis. The money was raised by various community enterprises such as the usual fairs, suppers,

OUTDOOR MUNICIPAL THEATER, ANOKA, MINNESOTA

bazars, etc., but partly also by performances given in the theater itself. At the outset a canvas cover was provided which could be stretched over the auditorium in case of rain, but this was found unsatisfactory and has been abandoned.

The theater cost approximately $4,500. The unsatisfactory character of the cement seats led early to an improvement in the form of wooden-slatted seats made to lie upon the cement benches. These seats have comfortable backs.

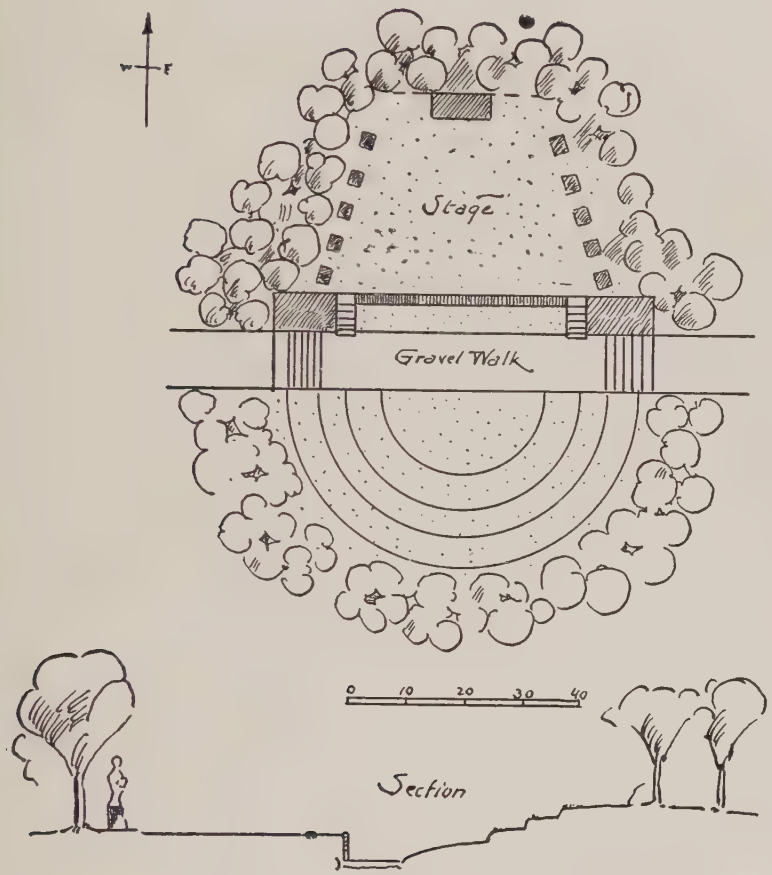
The theater has been successfully used for pageants, various kinds of plays, including motion picture shows, and for musical performances. Architecturally, dramatically and socially it is considered a striking success.

GARDEN THEATER IN DRESDEN

IN the Royal Park in Dresden I came one day, quite unexpectedly, upon a garden theater hidden in the midst of a considerable stretch of woods. The trees were old, large and stately, so that we had the feeling here of being in the big forest. The sun slanted warmly in through the opening in the tree tops, adding to the sense of seclusion an equally agreeable sense of warmth and welcome. I sat down on the grass terrace and for some time studied the delightful layout, after which I made the paced survey shown in the accompanying sketch (page 111).

This little theater was placed transversely upon a long straight path running through the woods. This path was not a structural axis in the general design of the park. It entered and crossed the orchestra pit immediately in front of the stage.

The orchestra pit was depressed about three feet below the general level, and the spoil from this



GARDEN THEATER, DRESDEN

excavation had been heaped up to form the circular grass terraces on which the spectators might sit. The stage was level and separated from the orchestra by a low retaining wall. At either end of this wall was a statuary group, marking a sort of proscenium.

At the back of the stage was another statuary group of considerable mass. Placed obliquely along either side of the stage were four rectangular pedestals about four feet high. I was left to conjecture their office. My guess was that they were used to support flambeaux for lighting the stage during performances.

I am obliged to testify without qualification that this is the most charming outdoor theater which I have ever seen. Yet it was of the most inexpensive construction, and the physical and topographic conditions under which it was built were of the most ordinary sort. It would seem that the ideas represented in this piece of work are capable of wide adoption.

REDLANDS BOWL

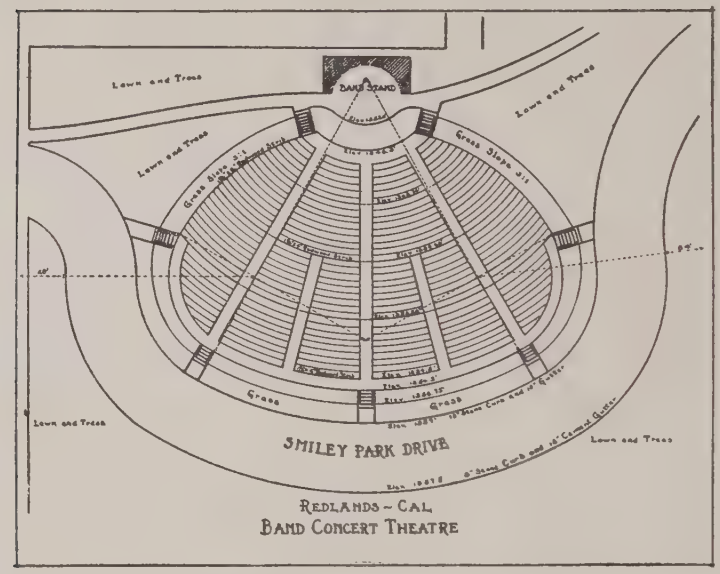
WHAT is known as the "Bowl" at Redlands, Cal., is an enterprise of the city park department. This well-built amphitheater was provided mainly with a view to the presentation of public band concerts.

A natural depression was brought to a smooth grade and permanent seats of concrete and wood were built. The stage is simply a hood, practically the quarter concavity of a sphere, used as a band stand. It is hardly suited for dramatic performances, though it could probably be adopted without much difficulty to the presentation of outdoor kinematics.

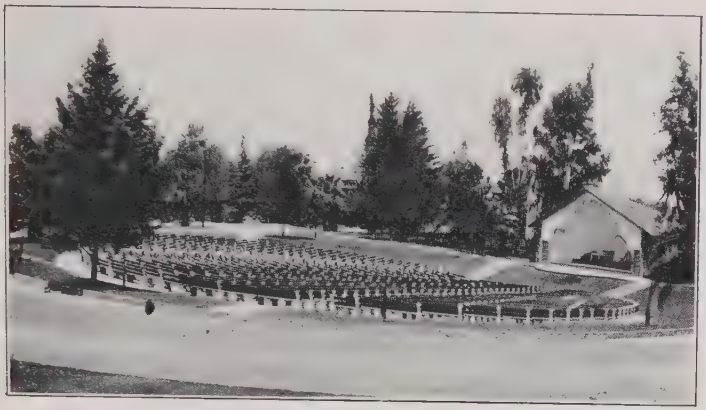
This amphitheater is perhaps somewhat too open. There is a magnificent view of the mountains, but there is too much temptation for the attention of the audience to stray away from the stage. The big paved automobile road encircling the theater is convenient for access, but the coming and going

of automobiles, and even of visitors on foot, must measurably disturb players and auditors.

For every outdoor theater it is especially desir-



able that provision be made for the parking of automobiles at some little distance. Noisy traffic and other external disturbances must be reduced to the minimum by carefully laid plans to that end.



TWO VIEWS OF "THE BOWL," REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA

THE JOHN HAY AMPHITHEATER

THIS most striking design was carried out in the years 1912-13 at Camp John Hay, Baguio, Philippine Islands. It was the work of United States Army officers, Maj.-Gen. J. Franklin Bell being apparently the leading mover. Maj.-Gen. Bell contributed an account of the undertaking to the *Teachers' Assembly Herald,* a local publication. His statement is of such interest that it should be reproduced in full. He says:

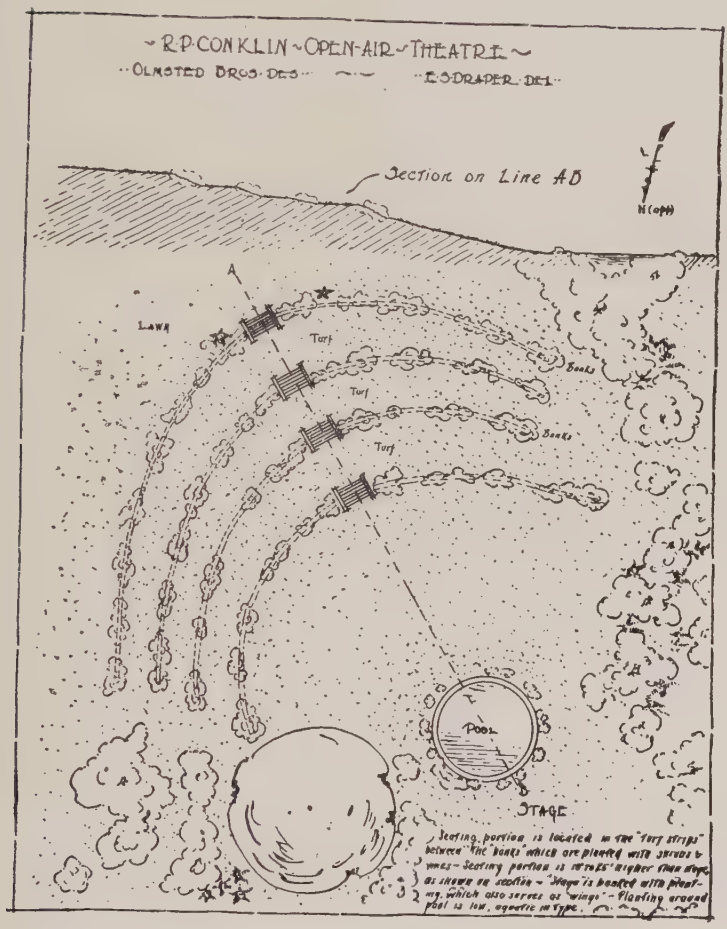
"That the natural semi-circular hollow in which the John Hay Amphitheater is constructed possessed most remarkable acoustical properties was demonstrated by actual test before construction work was begun. This camp has no chapel or recreation hall, but possesses an unusual outdoor climate. These circumstances led to the conversion of this natural hollow into what its very form seemed to suggest, an open-air amphitheater, where

the garrison, and the general public as well, might occasionally enjoy mental recreation and distraction, as well as religious services.

"The general plan of the amphitheater is that of semi-circular tiers of seats, arranged on five terraces, rising one above the other toward the rear and facing southward toward the speaker's platform, situated down below at the exact center of the semi-circle.

"The terraces are twelve feet wide, planted to grass, and rise in steps of two and one-half feet each, except the highest—the rear one—which rises five feet above the one next to it.

"At the inception of this project, we failed fully to comprehend the true size of the undertaking, but notwithstanding the difficulties and delays encountered from time to time, we persevered in our efforts and to-day our task is well-nigh completed. The results have given us just cause to feel gratified with what we have achieved. I have never known any one who, having observed these results, does not consider this amphitheater the prettiest thing of the kind ever seen.


R.P.CONKLIN OPEN-AIR THEATRE
OLMSTED BROS. DES.
E.S.DRAPER DEL.
Section on Line AB
N (opt)
A
B
Lawn
Turf
Turf
Turf
Banks
Banks
Pool
STAGE
Seating portion is located in the "turf strips" between the "banks" which are planted with shrubs & vines - Seating portion is NOT RAISED higher than stage as shown on section - Stage is bounded with plantings which also serves as "wings" - Planting around pool is low, aquatic in type.

"The first thing we had to do was to make the terraces. It took very little grading to prepare them because the ground was of such appropriate shape. Then the construction of the rock walls which revet the terraces was begun. This required considerable labor, all of which was done by Igorots. On top of each of these terrace revetment walls, and forming a part thereof, is a low *flower* wall, about a foot high. The rock with which the terrace walls are constructed was largely dug out of the ground itself, while grading the terraces, and is of very variegated and beautiful colors, reds, browns, and lavenders predominating. The rock in the flower walls came from the Whitmarsh Valley and the Naguilian Road country. It is a grayish white and black color and is very ornamental in effect. The contrast between these walls heightens the artistic character of the whole. There are six terrace walls, the flower wall on top of each being filled with earth and planted to flowers of various kinds and colors. Immediately behind the high, rear terrace wall is a hedge of hibiscus and behind that a row of tree-ferns. In the rear of these tree-

ferns and rising higher is the last wall, a flower wall, about two feet high. In fact, this flower wall extends entirely around the perimeter of the amphitheater, above as well as below. The lowest terrace wall is extended until it forms a figure closely resembling an ellipse. It is, in shape, actually two semi-circles, whose ends are joined by right lines thirty feet long. In the center of this elliptical figure stands a pagoda, whose roof rests on six pillars, the whole hexagonal in shape, with a semi-elliptical platform between the two pillars on its front side and extending five feet to the front of them. This platform and pagoda serve as a pulpit for religious exercises.

"The elliptical figure, made by the flower wall surrounding the pagoda, contains two side walks, following the diameter of the semi-circular amphitheater and connecting the pagoda with flights of steps (discussed later) which continue upward along the diameter to the perimeter of the amphitheater. These side walks divide the elliptical space into two lawns, the rear, or south lawn, behind the pagoda, and the front, or north lawn, in front of the pagoda

which (with the front half of the pagoda floor) constitutes the stage for out-of-door performances. The front lawn slopes slightly toward the audience, which faces southward. The south, or rear lawn, is twenty inches lower than the front, or north lawn. The pagoda is surrounded by a side walk on its southern side, and by steps all around it rising to its floor, two feet above the side walk.

"One break is made in the elliptical flower wall surrounding the pagoda by two wing walls built to include a large boulder and a pretty pine tree in the lawn surrounding the pagoda.

"Five equidistant flights of stairs (composed of landings on terraces and steps between) rise from the lowest terrace wall to the perimeter wall of the amphitheater to facilitate access to seats. Two of these walls, previously referred to, follow the diameter of the semi-circular terraces, and one of them bisects them into two equal quadrants. The other two stairways bisect these quadrants. One of the stairways is picturesquely broken up into branches by intervening obstacles.

"None of the trees which stood on the ground oc-

JOHN HAY AMPHITHEATER, BAGUIO, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

OUTDOOR AUDITORIUM, SUGAR LOAF RESERVATION, MASSACHUSETTS

cupied by the structure have been disturbed. They have all been preserved. One of them, apparently standing on top of a flight of steps, really grew on a large boulder and the steps were made in the terrace for the purpose of preserving the tree. The preservation of this tree, as well as one which grows out of a very large boulder in the orchestra pit, adds considerably to the picturesqueness of the amphitheater.

"The stage, as already stated, includes that portion of the lawn between the pagoda and the lower terrace wall.

"A lot of very large boulders, or rocks, stuck out of the ground in the upper lefthand (western) portion of the amphitheater. These were so treated as to result in unique boxes, holding from fifteen to thirty persons each. These boxes are connected with flights of rustic steps.

"A rock tower, surrounding a very large and shapely pine tree, forms one of the striking architectural accents of the structure. There are other picturesque features, mainly consisting of oddities, too unusual in character to admit of lucid descrip-

tion. The entire structure is ornamented here and there with garden vases, varying in shape and color, filled with growing plants.

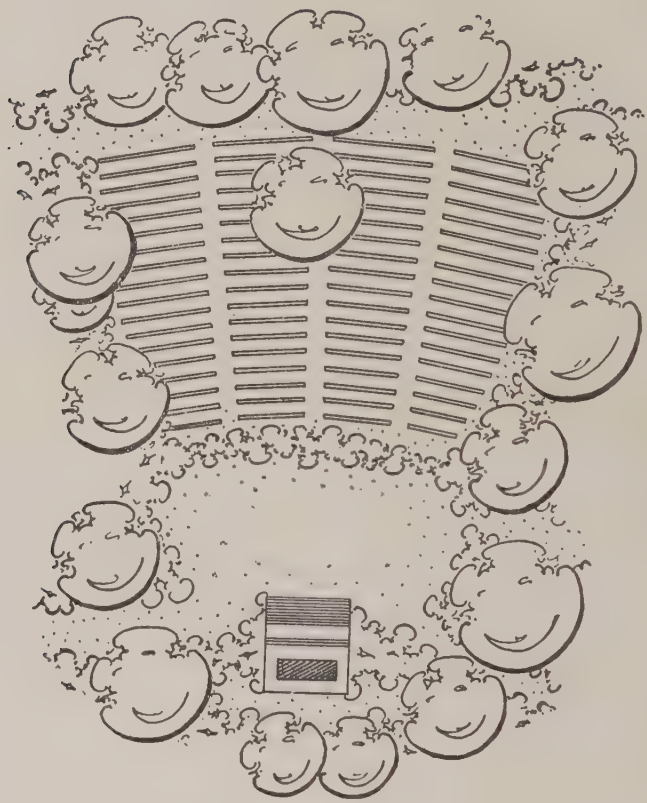
"This amphitheater can seat two thousand people, with three rows of chairs on each terrace, and its acoustical properties are so good that one can stand in the pagoda and, speaking in a stage whisper, be heard almost equally well by every person in the audience whose hearing is normal, provided perfect stillness prevails and no wind is astir. Its rather profuse ornamentation with flowers presents a pleasing and unique feature not embodied, so far as is known, in any other open-air amphitheater in the world."

CARMEL, CALIFORNIA

IN California the outdoor theater flourishes beyond all other parts of the world. A favorable climate must receive some of the credit for this fact, but the healthy imaginations of the Californians have undoubtedly helped.

The outdoor theater at Carmel is not one of the most celebrated in California, but is perhaps content to be one of the best. It is not too large, it is not over-pretentious, it is snuggled away amongst friendly shady trees, it has a fine foliage background for its stage. All these are positive good qualities. The stage background in particular is one of the best.

The accompanying photographs by Mr. L. S. Slevin will give a good idea of the theater and its ingratiating surroundings.


OPEN AIR THEATRE
CARMEL — CALIF.

AUDITORIUM, STAGE AND ENTRANCE GATE OF THE OUTDOOR THEATER AT CARMEL, CALIFORNIA

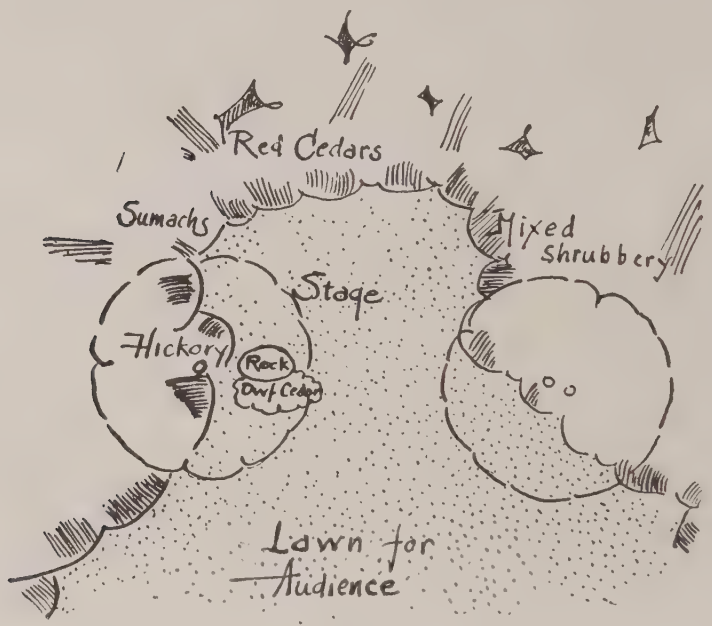
Copyright by L. S. Slevin

A PLAYERS' GREEN

MR. JENS JENSEN is a poet and a painter as well as a landscape architect. Mr. Jensen does not build theaters—at least not by preference—but he does introduce a "players' green" now and then into his suburban gardens. The nomenclature is significant. A simple nook of shaded lawn is certainly not just the same as an outdoor theater with stage and seats, no matter how plain the theater. And a players' green on a private home place is surely quite different from a Greek auditorium on the campus of a big state university.

As illustrating the idea the accompanying sketch plan and photographs will serve very well. This particular design consists of a small, nearly circular, clipped lawn, backed and flanked by trees, and serving as the stage. Fronting it on the same level the same lawn enlarges into a space where auditors may sit. The transition from stage to auditorium

is marked by a sort of proscenium consisting of a larger arching tree on either side, and to some extent also by the "council rock." This latter is in reality a stage feature, though placed well to the



PLAYERS' GREEN
Mr Jens Jensen des. F.A.W. del.

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TWO VIEWS OF PLAYERS' GREEN ON PRIVATE GROUNDS

Designed by Jens Jensen. *See plan, page 126*

front where the stage blends away to the auditorium. This council stone is a symbol (and Mr. Jensen is very fond of symbols) intended to suggest to susceptible minds the thought of the American aborigines gathered round their council rock for the recitation of their native epics or the enactment of their many mystic rituals. Beside this stone, and on the side nearest the audience, is carefully placed a small dwarf juniper.

When this players' green is used at night it is lighted by a few open flambeaux.

It has been successfully used for recitations, ballad singing and simple musical performances. So far as I know it has not been tried out with larger enterprises requiring groups of actors.

The idea of the players' green seems to be especially suitable to the private country place or suburban garden. It is a feature which can be easily developed in such surroundings by any landscape architect of moderate imagination.

PLAYERS' GREEN, COLUMBUS PARK, CHICAGO

A NEW outdoor theater or players' green is just now being designed for Columbus Park, Chicago, by Mr. Jens Jensen, landscape architect of that city. This simple, but attractive, playground is to be constructed during the spring of 1917.

The stage consists of an informal lawn separated from the auditorium by a narrow strip of water. The auditorium is also an informal lawn sloping toward the stage very gently. The stage background is formed by heavy plantings of trees and shrubbery. Larger trees informally placed at the front of the stage and on the nearer side of the water make a very informal postenium.

The landscape plantings about the stage and auditorium form an important feature of this design. The plants used are hawthorn, crab apple, plum, sumacs, etc. Elm trees are used in the back-

AN OVTDOOR THEATRE
COLVMBVS PARK
CHICAGO ILLINOIS

ground, while the four trees in the foreground are American aspen. Along the brook to the right of the audience are planted interested masses of cornus alba, while in the water are various aquatic plants such as calamus, cat-tails, joint grass, iris, pickerel weed, arrow-head, blue lobelia and water-lilies.

Back of the boulders are fire pits for the lights. The lights will thus be concealed and the stage lighting will be indirect. Near the left hand corner in front is one large boulder which serves as a council rock and from which the speakers may address the audience.

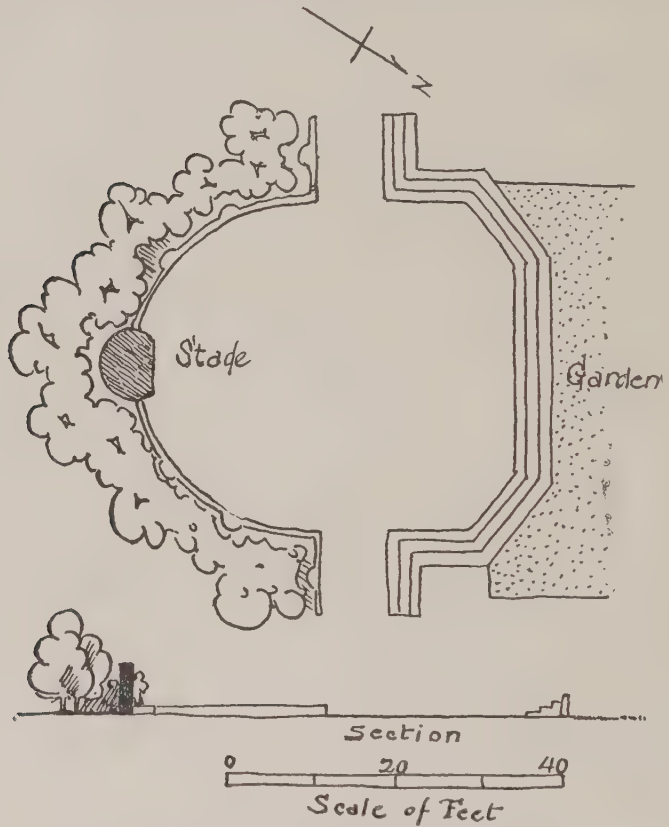
ITALIAN GARDEN THEATERS

NEVER was the garden theater more widely or more skillfully managed than in the wonderful Italian villas built during the period of the Renaissance. These houses and gardens reached a high stage of artistic excellence. The garden theater was only a detail in a large layout, but it was a detail very commonly used.

These Italian theaters were nearly always small affairs intended for the accommodation of the members of the household and their guests. Amateur theatricals and amateur musical performances seem to have been the principal form of entertainment used in these theaters. Some of them were so small as to accommodate only two or three dozen persons. The snugness and intimacy of these little theaters is to be especially admired.

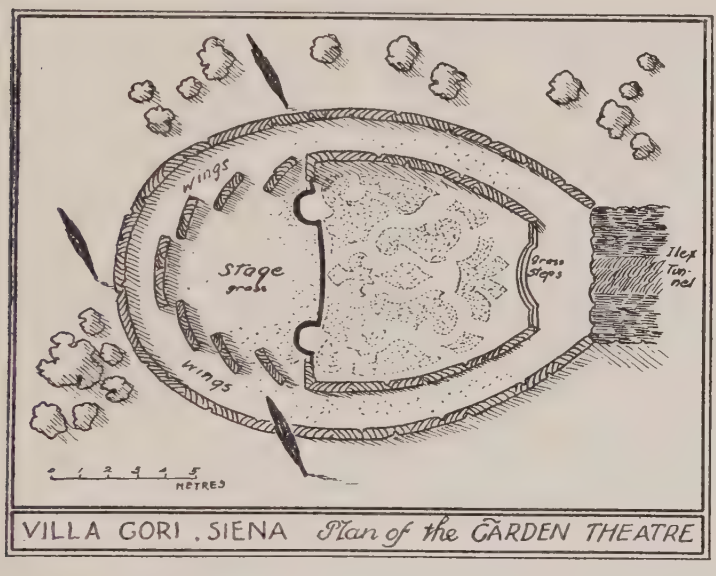
They were practically always developed as an integral portion of the larger garden design. Sometimes they terminated an axis, sometimes they occu-

pied the space between two buildings, sometimes they merely filled a nook or angle of the garden, though never what might be looked upon as a waste



THEATER OF HERCULES—ISOLA BELLA

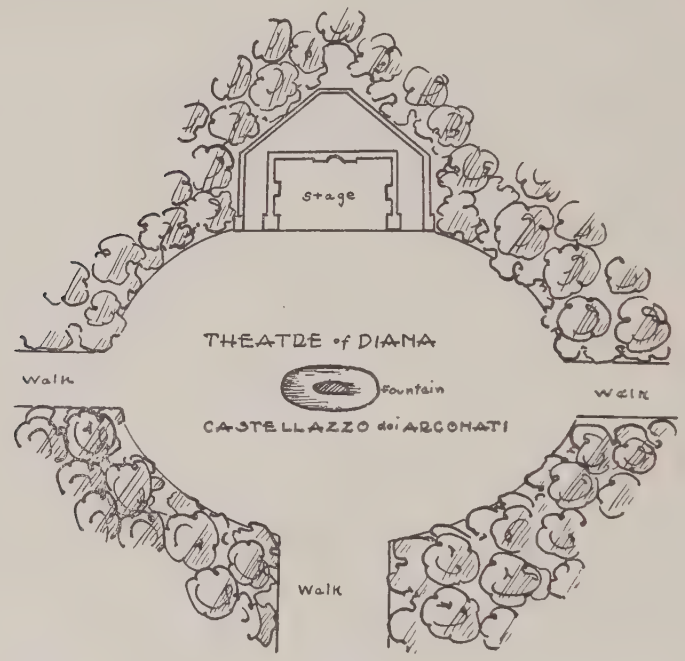
space. Since these Italian gardens were nearly all of formal design the typical location for the theater was upon a minor axis. This, however, is a type having very many exceptions.



VILLA GORI . SIENA *Plan of the* GARDEN THEATRE

In spirit and in use the Italian garden theater was more like the Players' Green as devised by Mr. Jens Jensen for his very modern clients in Chicago than it was like any more formal garden structure now in use in America. That is these

garden theaters were simply incidental items in large private gardens and were intended solely



Plan. Scale about 20

Section thru' center

for private use. Their present charm of course is largely due to the years of growth which have come to them and sometimes to the mellowness of decay. The designs are very interesting to the student of landscape architecture, though they cannot very often be adapted to modern American uses.*

* The student who wishes to know more about the Italian garden theaters should consult Triggs' "Art of Garden Design in Italy" (London, 1906), and the interesting sketch by Professor H. V. Hubbard in "Landscape Architecture," 4:53, 1914.

SUGAR LOAF

AT South Deerfield, Mass., is the Sugar Loaf Reservation, a state park of 150 acres, the chief feature of which is a fine mountain giving splendid views up and down the Connecticut Valley. The reservation, however, is open for various sorts of public recreation, and quite incidentally there has been built the open-air auditorium shown in the photograph. It is an impromptu scheme in every way and has never been taken seriously by any one. It has not been used for dramatic performances, and thus the trees which cut up the "stage" have not been troublesome. It seems to have served the need of Sunday school gatherings and of various occasional meetings at which public speaking constituted the entire program.

The orientation is good, the surroundings agreeable, and the simple rustic furniture appropriate.

This very simple enterprise, probably costing less

than $100, illustrates how easily an outdoor auditorium can be provided. In this case the natural topography was not at all favorable.

ABENAKI CHAPEL

CAMP ABENAKI is a successful summer camp for boys maintained by the Y. M. C. A. on the shores of Lake Champlain at North Hero, Vt. At this place the boys have built the very simple but wholly adequate "chapel" illustrated in photograph.

A shallow basin offers a fairly satisfactory site, and the "pulpit" is prettily backed by a solid wall of arbor vitaes. The "pulpit" stands toward the west, thus making an advantageous orientation for meetings held in the forenoon, when this auditorium is mostly used.

It will be readily seen that the cost of construction was negligible. Yet this outdoor "chapel" most beneficially and agreeably serves every need.

The use of such airy outdoor meeting places for various religious services is much to be commended. In the middle western and southern states especially there is a strong feeling for this

ABENAKI CHAPEL

PRIVATE GARDEN THEATER, "WELD," MASSACHUSETTS

sort of religious gathering, and it is rather remarkable that more serious and intelligent efforts have not been made to provide dignified and attractive proseuches along these lines.

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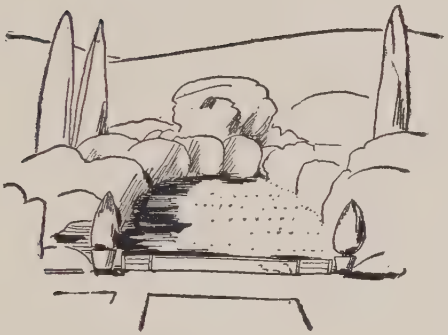

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